Atwood's Animals

Triangular Identification in *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English
in the
University of Canterbury
by
S. R. Borrell

University of Canterbury
2005

Abstract

My principal focus in this thesis is on the role of nonhuman animals in three novels by Margaret Atwood: *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*. This is a work of literary criticism, but its themes extend to encompass various disciplinary perspectives. My approach is, primarily, that of 'animal studies.' Despite a proliferation of animals in Atwood's work, her novels have rarely been so extensively addressed from this angle. This means that my thesis makes an original contribution to the criticism of her work, and that it promotes discussion of Atwood in animal studies. The scope of my work also covers feminist and postcolonial theories regarding Canadian literature, as I draw attention to a three-way parallel between animals, women and Canada in these novels, which I refer to as 'triangular identification' on the part of the protagonists.

I have divided my discussion into two sections. The first addresses the ways in which triangular identification and animals in particular function as a tool in the process of 'de-victimisation' which Atwood outlines in *Survival*. I argue that motifs of hunting and animal appropriation help the protagonists to recognise and react to their status as the victims of social structures. My second section goes beyond the ideas put forward by Atwood. I look at the protagonists' developing 'non-victimhood' in terms of various theories of subjectivity, and explore some of the more problematic implications of the way they (and Atwood) use and then dispense with triangular identification. Finally, I examine Atwood's use of animals in the context of recent theories of animal representation in literature, concluding that in these terms, her work does, perhaps inevitably, exploit animals, but that the extremes of animal identification in these novels nevertheless suggest positive alternatives to this.

Contents

1. Introduction: Three Others

According to Linda Hutcheon, 'most commentators agree that the postmodern has meant, among many other things, a reconsideration of cultural positions of centrality in favour of the margins, the ex-centric; it has also meant a valuing of the different over the same' (1990, 151). However, because active marginalisation is so often the result of an attempt to define the self against something else, those entities most 'Othered' tend not to be the most distant ones; closer entities pose more of a threat to identity because the boundaries are less obvious. Nonhuman animals are a striking example of a marginalised group that is both valued by and threatening to human culture. As Erica Fudge explains, animals 'are both similar to and different from us' (7), which results in both 'fascination with animals' (7) and fear of a kinship with them: '...we wish to wipe it out; annihilate it' through control and domination (Fudge, 8). When they appear in literature, animals feed into both of these impulses: on the one hand, the juxtaposed associations of kinship and Otherness are a source of fascination, yet on the other, these animals are theoretical, controlled versions of the Other because they appear within the confines of human literature.

In this thesis, my principal focus is the role of nonhuman animals in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin.* My initial approach has been to establish how animals are used in these novels. I look at some of the reasons that Atwood herself puts forward for using animals in literature and I evaluate her treatment of animals partly in terms of this. Most often, Atwood has her protagonists identify with other animals, 'real' or imagined, as a means of illustrating their victimhood. According to her, this sort of identification is a necessary step in a process of development from victimhood towards agency and liberty. However, I also go beyond Atwood's ideas and question the implications of her use of animals in terms of some broader issues pertaining to literary animal representation.

To the extent that they are victims, Atwood's protagonists desire individual power or agency, yet are caught within apparently inescapable social structures. In an article on human agency, Piotr Sztompka explains that agency can be seen both as an attribute 'of individual actors and one of collective agents' (28). He writes that humans are torn between these two: 'we feel bound by norms, rules, traditions, expectations and requirements... But at the same time we perceive ourselves as persons, unique individuals with some identity, integrity, independence and freedom' (28). In terms of Atwood's novels, this 'dilemma of structure and action' (Sztompka, 29) can be applied in two ways. On the one hand, her protagonists resist structured social collectivity because it impinges on their individual agency. On the other hand, they do not

become entirely independent but look for or accidentally find other groups, including other animals, which are also limited or marginalised by human society. In another article on 'social becoming', Sztompka also describes some instances of synthesis between collective and individual forms of agency.

> When still accepting the dichotomy of individual and society, it is recognized that part of individual identity is derived from the membership in groups, and part of group identity is an aggregated effect of the quality of members... The existence of an individual and the group seem to merge (254).

I address Atwood's animals in conjunction with two other marginalised groups which strike me as especially significant in her novels. Atwood's protagonists are frequently concerned with issues surrounding the oppression of women and of Canada, and I argue that the appearance of animals in these novels is tied up with these other two concerns in a three-way parallel that I call 'triangular identification.' What these three groups have in common is that each is not only limited within but marginalised by dominant human structures.

A useful explanation of structural oppression is offered by Val Plumwood's 'Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics.' Plumwood uses the idea of a framework to explain three aspects of the centre, and although the use of a centre-margin paradigm is problematic, I use Plumwood's ideas as a starting point here because she addresses exactly those attitudes which marginalise women, the colonised, and animals. Plumwood places androcentrism, colonialism (combining ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism [338]) and anthropocentrism alongside one another and explores the overlapping relationship between the three. For each, she outlines five basic 'centrist' characteristics, summarised here.

1. The Other is 'set apart as having a different nature, is seen as part of a different, lower order of being lesser or lacking in reason' (337), which is usually 'the defining feature' (338) of the centre . 'Continuity is denied, relationship ignored ... Differences are exaggerated ... to fit a model of virtue defined by exclusion of the Other's supposed traits' (339). Separate 'natures' explain, justify, and naturalize' an unequal relationship between centre and Other (337), and 'Differences are exaggerated ... to fit a model of virtue defined by exclusion of the Other's supposed traits' (339) and 'block identification and sympathy' (337).

2. Stereotyping and homogenisation take place, and polarisation is thus treated as dualism (337, 339)
3. The rights of the other are denied, and 'there is a strong motivation to represent them as inessential' (337-338). 'Dependency on the Other cannot be acknowledged' (338).
4. Incorporation occurs, in which the other is 'is recognized only to the extent that it is assimilated' to the centre (339).
5. Instrumentalism occurs, in that Others are defined in passive terms without agency, in relation to the uses to which the centre may put them. (339)

In terms of the overlapping relationships that Plumwood sees between gender, culture and species relations, her ideas are relevant to *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin.* The three marginalised groups of non-human animals, women and the colonised (in this case Canada, as I shall explain) represent, parallel and overlap each other in their relationship with the 'centre' in Atwood's novels. Moreover, not only are these three entities strongly interrelated, they also intersect in the human protagonist; in each novel, this character is a woman, a Canadian, and to some extent conscious of her own animality.

However, structured models like Plumwood's are obviously artificial, and have a tendency to reduce human relations to a limited set of fixed possibilities, often by assuming the existence of a centre. Poststructuralism seeks to destabilise these sorts of assumptions, 'to deconstruct the conceptions by means of which we have so far understood the human' (Sarup, 2). In this thesis I contrast '-centric' structural models with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's suggested alternative; they oppose what they call the aborescent, the centred, tree-like structure, with the rhizome, an a-structural form of vegetation like grass. Nick Mansfield explains:

> ...a rhizome is a type of stem that expands underground horizontally, sending down roots and pushing up shoots that arise and proliferate not from a single core or trunk, but from a network, which expands endlessly from any of its points... Where a tree is a single vector aimed at a specific goal, the rhizome expands endlessly in any number of directions, without a centre ... It is this set of contrasts that Deleuze and Guattari hope to develop when they use the two botanical structures as metaphors (143).

The advantage of the rhizome as applied to human culture is that it is a kind of non-structure. It has no centre, and therefore no margins, and this means that it is a far broader and less fixed

conception of life than is offered by the frameworks of centre and other. I juxtapose Plumwood's and Deleuze and Guattari's approaches as ways in which to understand the development of Atwood's protagonists away from victimhood, and the role that animals play in the triangular identification which is part of that process. As a means of situating my ideas, I have briefly outlined some relevant theories on Canada, women and animals, taking each in turn.

Canadian postcolonial identity

The difference between colonialism as Plumwood means it and the twentieth-century Canadian situation is in Canada's complex version of postcolonialism. In *Splitting Images*, Hutcheon looks at the extent to which contemporary Canada can be considered generally postcolonial, noting that 'descent from colonisers or settlers... virtually means that "white" Canadians are in the awkward position of being both colonised and coloniser at once' (1991, 73). She emphasises that this does not mean 'that Canada's history and what have been called the "psychological effects of a colonial past" [W.J. Keith] are not both very real and very important; indeed, parts of Canada, especially the west, still feel colonized' (1991, 74). However, those Canadians who feel colonised also include 'white' Canadians. Hutcheon addresses the role of the United States in Canada's current colonial status, as it is seen as a significant imperial force. 'Canadians often feel at least culturally colonized by American mass media. They also often feel somehow politically threatened by the constant reminders of the power and the imperialist impulses of our neighbour to the south' (1991, 78). This threat of the proximity and power of the United States is further amplified by a widely shared language, which makes it doubly difficult for Canada to define itself against cultural influences from this source.

Thus, Canada as a nation was, and to an extent still is, a colony, and 'when Canadian culture is called post-colonial today, the reference is rarely (at least explicitly) to the native culture, which might be the more accurate historical use of the term' (Hutcheon, 1991, 75). As I will explain, this is the way Atwood uses ideas of the post-colonial, and it can have serious implications. Defining a nation as postcolonial without reference to indigenous peoples tends to render those peoples invisible; their experience becomes unnecessary to the purposes of discourse. Thus, although it is reasonable to refer to Canada as postcolonial, and to include white Canadians in that idea, it is important to acknowledge the different levels or versions of colonisation that have occurred both within and outside Canada (Hutcheon, 1991, 77).

Perhaps in part because of this complicated cultural history, another difficulty facing Canadian writers is, as Atwood writes,

> ...the search for 'the Canadian identity'; sometimes we are told that this item is simply something we have mislaid... [A]t other times we have been told that the object in question doesn't really exist and we are pursuing a phantom. Sometimes we are told that although we don't have one of these 'identities', we ought to, because other countries do (1995, 7).

Atwood suggests that reading Canadian literature is a useful path to national identity, as it can work as a map, 'if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of who and where we have been' (1972, 19). Many critics emphasise the influences of marginalisation in Canadian literature. Lorna Irvine writes,

> For Canadians, this 'experience of both participating in and standing outside' the language of their own country which, in its turn, dramatically reflects colonial positions toward dominating countries like England, France, and the United States, influences, in idiosyncratic ways, the metaphors and structures of their literature (10).

One result of such an ambivalent position is that irony, with its potential political application, is an important element in Canadian discourse because it is a way of 'saying two things at once, of pretending to speak a dominant "language" while subverting it at the same time' (Hutcheon, 1991, vii). This makes it a particularly useful tool in marginalised writing, whatever the nature of its specific agenda. 'The postmodern in Canada, as well as elsewhere, overlaps with the feminist and the post-colonial in its use of irony to unmask and debunk' (Hutcheon, 1991, vii-viii).

As a response to the postcolonial condition, this resistance is often an attempt to find a means of cultural survival. Atwood applies this idea to Canada in general as she argues that 'The central symbol for Canada...is undoubtedly Survival' (1972, 32). She suggests that while survival motifs in Canadian literature sometimes refer to the hostile natural environment or to personal crises, the importance of the motif for Canada stems from a sense of threat to cultural as well as individual survival.

> Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that Canada as a whole is a victim, or an 'oppressed minority,' or 'exploited.' Let us suppose in short that Canada is a colony. A partial definition of a colony is that it is a place from which a profit is made, but *not by*

> *the people who live there*: the major profit from a colony is made in the centre of the empire. That's what colonies are for ... Of course, there are cultural side-effects which are often identified as 'the colonial mentality,' and it is these which are examined here; but the root cause for them is economic (1972, 35-36).

What Atwood seems to be doing here is deducing a general theory of Canadian literature; she tries to apply these ideas to Canada as a whole. While, as I have suggested above, there are obvious problems with such an enterprise, it is necessary to explore how this theory relates to her novels in order to understand them. She concludes, 'If Canada is a collective victim, it should pay some attention to the Basic Victim Positions' (1972, 36), which she lists and explains:

- *'Position One: To deny the fact that you are a victim'*

In this position, 'you must spend much time explaining away the obvious, suppressing anger, and pretending that certain visible facts do not exist' (36). *'The basic game* in Position One is "Deny your victim-experience"' (36).

- *'Position Two: To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim, but to explain this as an act of Fate, the Will of God, the dictates of Biology (in the case of women, for instance), the necessity decreed by History, or Economics, or the Unconscious, or any other large general powerful idea' (37).*

This position displaces the source of oppression, refuting the possibilities of self-blame or agency (37). *'The basic game* in Position Two is Victor/Victim' (37).

- '*Position Three: To acknowledge the fact that you are a victim but to refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable*' (37).

Here, 'You can distinguish between the *role* of Victim (which probably leads you to seek victimisation even when there's no call for it), and the *objective experience* that is making you a victim' (38). Thus, the real cause of oppression is identified and can be addressed constructively. Atwood says that this is a dynamic position; people must move out of it into either Position Two or Four (38). *'The basic game* of Position Three is repudiating the Victim role' (38).

- '*Position Four: To be a creative non-victim*' (38)

Atwood says that, strictly speaking, Position Four is not a Victim Position, it is a position of freedom for non-victims or ex-victims 'who have been able to move into it from Position Three because the external and/or the internal causes of victimisation have been removed' (38).

Atwood says that in this Position, people can accept their own experiences and no longer play Victor/Victim games (38, 39).

Atwood asserts that the Victim Positions are generally applicable; 'the same whether you are a victimized country, a victimized minority or a victimized individual' (1972, 36).

In section one of this thesis (chapters two and three), I explore how she applies these generalised Victim Positions in *Surfacing, The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin,* looking at three pairs of victim and oppressor, which parallel one another or are mutually reflexive, and of course, it is where three victims overlap in the protagonist that one finds the concept of triangular identification articulated. However, the Canada of Atwood's fiction resembles the Canada of her theory in that certain perspectives are excluded. The idea of a generally applicable model of victimhood elides the differences between groups, treating victims primarily as victims and not as individuals or individual groups with specific aims.

Female Identity in Canada

Female writers share the postcolonial attempt to articulate identity and to destabilise hegemony, while working within conventions that may already have shaped the writer. Atwood suggests that at the outset of her career, the combination of influences was a hurdle. 'Could you be female, a writer, be good at it, get published, not commit suicide, and be Canadian too?' (1990, 17). Irvine observes that 'Culturally and sexually, fictions [by Canadian women] quite naturally introduce a new world mythos that rejects "westering," with its self-conscious individualism. Indeed, many Canadian works translate what is perceived to be American aggression and domination into metaphors of masculinity' (11). Atwood certainly does this, sometimes directly, sometimes through a network of metaphors. Her female protagonists tend to be associated with Canada, not only because they are Canadian but also because of this shared sense of colonisation. When her female protagonists overtly identify with Canada, as in the case of *Surfacing,* oppressive men tend to be associated with the United States and with imperialism.

This sense of alienation shared by feminism and postcolonialism raises the question of the relationship between woman and nation. According to Irvine,

> ...feminization, assumed by the male writer in a colonial situation to be synonymous with powerlessness, does not have the same political implications for women ... the woman writer has quite a different story to tell ... [which] ... can be perceived as another version

> of the colonial story. But it can also articulate a female voice that politically and culturally personifies Canada (11).

If this 'feminisation' entails the personification of Canada as female, then the idea seems problematic; it exacerbates the already complex postcolonial situation by imposing gender issues. This artificial connection also ignores the fact that men have also been the victims of colonisation and of gender power relations. Indeed, Atwood does not appear to equate Canada with femininity; although she writes about female characters as Canadians, she does not write about Canada as female. However, to the extent that female and postcolonial experiences overlap in their history of oppression, Irvine's point does apply in some of Atwood's novels.

Naturally, common concerns often lead to common literary approaches. Irvine writes, 'Shared attitudes toward oppression suggest to [Margaret] Homans a possible union of French and North American [feminist] theory'(10), which would function well 'in the work of women writers in countries dominated by other countries, writers who have, therefore, "besides gender, another reason – either race or nationally – for linguistic alienation"' (Homans in Irvine, 10). There are, broadly speaking, two possible means of literary resistance to oppression. One is that of subversion. Irvine writes that 'within already established patterns of colonization, or at least of economic and political domination, women writers find that subversive language powerfully connects their cultural and psychological situations, their positions as Canadians and as women' (11). Alternatively, one can take a more direct approach, acknowledging and asserting that one *has* occupied Victim Positions, and openly attacking the oppressor. As Moi notes, androcentrism's own internal contradictions provide opportunities for more direct rejection too. For instance, 'If one held that the rights of the individual were sacred, it became increasingly difficult to argue that women's rights somehow were not' (Moi, 64).

Instances of female madness, considered an opposite of the rational male, provide useful examples of both subversive and overt resistance. Certain disciplines such as psychology, and later postmodernism and poststructuralism, liberate the Other's pen, as they bring an acceptance of *all* literature and *all* subjects as inevitably constructed and intertextual, and thus reject the notion of the single, exclusive truth upheld by centrist frameworks. For example, Moi examines Virginia Woolf's rejection of traditional humanism, which, according to Moi, is 'in effect part of patriarchal ideology' (8). 'At its centre is the seamlessly unified self – either individual or collective – which is commonly called "Man"' (8). In response, Woolf' 'reveals a deeply

sceptical attitude to the male-humanist concept of an essential human identity' (9). As Woolf sometimes does, one can question this essentialism through exploration of the psyche.

> For psychoanalysis, the human subject is a complex entity, of which the conscious mind is only a small part. Once one has accepted this view of the subject, however, it becomes impossible to argue that even our conscious wishes and feelings originate within a unified self...'(Moi, 10).

Postmodern writing, of course, allows for and self-consciously foregrounds the influences of unconscious ideology on the psyche, even if the causes themselves cannot always be identified. Thus, some writers create psychologically 'abnormal' characters to question notions of self. As Moi writes, 'The subject whose language lets [unconscious] forces disrupt the symbolic order ... is also the subject who runs the greater risk of lapsing into madness' (11).

With the exception of *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood's novels are about female experience, and often employ a first person narrative viewpoint, excluding and even criticising male perspectives. Sympathetic portrayals of male characters tend to be limited to men who break the patriarchal mould. However, despite the strong feminist strain in her works, Atwood emphasises that she is feminist only on her own terms, and resists any tendency towards the prescriptive. She feels that women as well as men are often marginalised by feminism, as it is easy to be seen to let the side down. 'When you've devoted much time and energy to bringing up your beloved children, frequently single-handedly, it didn't perk you up a lot to be called a dupe to men and a traitor to women' (20). However, 'You weren't supposed to complain. It seemed that some emotions were okay to express – for instance, negative emotions about men. Others were not okay – for instance, negative emotions about women' (1990, 21). As a writer, Atwood suggests that an alignment with feminism may in fact complicate the representation of women, because it comes with its own expectations. She does not want her character-creation to be limited by feminist ideals. 'I write about women because they interest me, not because I think I ought to' (1990, 22). She concludes, 'Feminism has done many good things for women writers, but surely the most important has been the permission to say the unsaid, to encourage women to claim their full humanity, which means acknowledging the shadows as well as the lights' (1990, 24).

Animal Identity

Full, complex identity for Atwood's protagonists can therefore include multiple facets, but I intend to focus on one more. This is the area of animality, which is occasionally treated as a part of feminist and Canadian theories, and which, though a pervasive element in Atwood's work, has been largely ignored in previous criticism of her novels. Robert McKay, one of the few to acknowledge this, notes that 'Despite [a] recurring fascination with the animal in Atwood's work, there has yet to be an exploration of the animal politics of her fiction' (207). Indeed, nonhuman animals appear in multiple forms in Atwood's novels. As is common in literature, they carry symbolic meaning and often appear in clichés and metaphors; however, they also appear in the diegetic or narrative worlds of the novels. In *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, these are dead animals, appearing in the form of meat and fur. In *Surfacing*, live animals also feature, not as characters or as pets, but nonetheless as fellow inhabitants of the protagonist's world. Thus, Atwood's animals play various roles, some of which she seems to recognise and control, but others of which, as I argue, seem to escape and even undermine her theories.

In this very unpredictability, there is a rebelliousness sometimes attributed to animals. In *The Postmodern Animal,* Steve Baker looks at the role of animals in postmodern art, suggesting that nonhumans offer the artist one means of articulating the postmodern human condition. He writes that the postmodern animal seems to work as 'an image of difference, an image of thinking difficultly and differently' (2000, 45). In other words, nonhumans illustrate marginalisation and transgression, and have been viewed this way particularly in conjunction with feminism, which is one of the ways in which Atwood uses them. Here, I argue that animals can illustrate postcolonial marginalisation and transgression too. According to Joan Dunayer, drawing parallels between women and other animals as marginalised can be counter-productive: 'Likening women to nonhuman animals undermines respect for women because nonhuman animals generally receive even less respect – far less. In most (if not all) contemporary human societies the status of nonhuman animals is much lower than women's' (16). Of course, in the context of postcolonialism, associating animals with the colonised can also be unhelpful, especially since colonisers themselves made this connection in order to emphasise the inferior Otherness of the cultures that they encountered (Thomas, 42).

However, these problems do not necessarily make such connection irrelevant, because of the simultaneous possibility for emancipating transgression. In ecofeminist theory, animals are used in this way. Ecofeminists address the human-nature opposition, acknowledging the

relationship between the marginalisation of the nonhuman and the marginalisation of the female. Carol Adams recognises such tendencies in *The Edible Woman* (among other works), saying, 'A feminist perspective in these novels links violence against people and violence against animals' (1990, 121). In Atwood's work, nature is not necessarily feminised; rather, the human is animalised when the female protagonists turn to nature. As I show in section one of this thesis, all three protagonists of the novels examined see in animals a parallel victimhood, which highlights the nature of their own. As Scholtmeijer puts it,

> the radical otherness of nonhuman animals provides a double source of power: recognition of the degree to which women are victimized by androcentric culture, and realization of solidarity in defiance of cultural authority. In their work on animals, moreover, women writers perform that most anti-androcentric of acts: thinking themselves into the being of the wholly 'other,' the animal. It turns out that this act is not an act of self-sacrifice but of empowerment (1995, 233).

However, there are also certain difficulties with this mode of reading, as I suggest in my final chapter. Firstly, it is impossible actually to think oneself wholly into the being of another species, as critics like John Simons point out (7). Secondly, even if this were possible, the use of other animals as a means to an end, whatever end that may be, might be perceived as the 'sacrifice' of the animal. I argue that in this is one sense in which Atwood's use of animals risks undermining the success of her Victim Positions.

Subjectivity

Atwood's use of nonhuman animals, especially when placed alongside discourses like feminism and postcolonialism, also complicates the nature of subjectivity in the three novels to be discussed here. Certain theories of the subject, especially those of humanism, have focussed on a self-legitimating, white and usually male human individual, and stress reason and autonomy as primary values, as opposed to irrational Others, including women, non-Western races, and the untamed natural world (Abrams, 116-117, Braidotti, 174). Poststructuralism rejects this conceptual tradition as based on unfounded assumptions, and according to Paul Sheenan, anti-anthropocentrism also plays a role in the current resistance to a narrowly conceived human subject:

> Environmental anxieties, Green politics and debates about 'speciesism' have decreased the sovereignty of the human animal more thoroughly than any number of structuralist-humanist debates could ever have done. What they share with the [poststructuralist] 'death of the subject' thesis is the anti-anthropocentric conviction that man is no longer the meaning of all things, but something to be measured, like anything else in the world (26).

There is certainly something of this in Atwood. According to Rosi Braidotti, 'Postmodernity is marked by the return of the "others" of modernity: woman, the sexual Other of man, the ethnic or native Other of the Eurocentric subject and the natural or earth Other of techno-culture emerge as counter-subjectivities' (117-118). In Atwood's work, this is often the case, with one problematic exception: omitting 'the ethnic or native Other,' Atwood treats Canada in general as a victim of colonisation. She does, however, treat female and natural Others, with which her protagonists identify as part of their opposition to oppression, making it appropriate to address the extent to which their projects align with postmodern and post-human notions of subjectivity. Atwood's protagonists refuse to accept male dominance, and, to various extents, they also resist anthropocentrism, aligning themselves with other animals, women and sometimes male victims instead. *Surfacing* and to some extent *The Blind Assassin* demonstrate resistance to imperialist forces too. Atwood's protagonists do not accept what Bruno Latour calls Modernity's 'two absolutisms: (1) the absolute separation of human culture from nonhuman nature, and (2) the absolute separation of present from past' (Connor, 7). In *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*, the protagonists try to reconcile past and present, and both *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing* include some degree of affinity between humans and other animals. In the case of *Surfacing,* this goes *beyond identification* to blur the boundaries of both species and subjectivity. Therefore, in the second part of this thesis, I use the theory of 'becoming' articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, 'a radical conceptual version of ... anti-anthropomorphism' (Braidotti, 137), as a means of measuring the extent, and limits, of post-humanism in Atwood's protagonists.

Becoming is the realisation of the rhizomatic model that I have already described; it is a state in which conventional, socialised subjectivity is somehow cast off in an escape from structure, or what Deleuze and Guattari call 'molarity'. In becoming, as Massumi explains,

> The point of departure is inevitably a molarized situation within the confines of which alternatives tend to present themselves as a choice between molar beings. A molarity other than that normally assigned to the body in escape from constraints normally suggests itself as an image of 'freedom' (94).

Thus, 'Becoming is an equilibrium-seeking system at a crisis point where it suddenly perceives a deterministic constraint, becomes "sensitive" to it, and is catapulted into a highly unstable and supermolecular state enveloping a bifurcating future' (95).

Like the collective agency that Sztompka describes, becoming also requires or leads to a degree of collectivity, with the distinction that perception itself seems to become collective in the absence of subjectivity. Massumi writes: 'It rarely happens that a becoming-other pivots on a single body. Most becoming-others are initiated by preexisting populations who develop a collective sensitivity to the molar constraints applied to them and join to counteractualize them' (102). Becoming, according to Massumi, needs 'a population free for the mutating' (140), and in Atwood's novels, the protagonists seem to try to use elements of triangular identification as sources for this.

Deleuze and Guattari describe various forms of becoming; my treatment of their ideas will centre on 'becoming-woman' and 'becoming-animal.'[1] By 'becoming-woman,' Deleuze and Guattari mean not the attainment of femaleness, but rather the deconstruction or transcendence of traditional masculinity, again with the aim of undoing subjectivity. As Braidotti explains, if man is 'the privileged referent of subjectivity' (78), the consequences are:

> on the one hand that masculinity is antithetical to the process of becoming and it can only be the site of deconstruction or critique. On the other hand, the becoming-woman is a fundamental step in the process of becoming, for both sexes (79).

---

[1] Language note: It is significant that the translators have chosen to use the terms 'becoming-animal' and 'becoming-woman' rather than 'to become an animal' or 'to become a woman'. The article is not present in the French *devenir animal*, but *devenir* is not a verb that can take an article, even when followed by a noun. Although in English, 'to become' often would, the absence of the article in the translation, and the move away from the infinitive, emphasise the concept itself. Deleuze and Guattari do not mean that the human becomes one, individualised animal or woman; the point is rather that the human in the state of 'becoming' takes on a more collective psyche, a state of mind rather than an individual identity, and so 'animal' and 'woman' are used like adjectives, not nouns.

> ...not just any other form of becoming minority... The becoming-woman is necessarily the starting-point [for becoming] in so far as the over-emphasis on masculine sexuality, the persistence of sexual dualism and the positioning of woman as the privileged figure of otherness are constitutive of Western subject-positions (79-80).

Becoming-animal is, similarly, 'a "deterritorialization", a kind of un-humaning of the human' (Baker, 102). Braidotti defines it as 'a spatial and temporal mode of enhancing common life-space which the subject never masters nor possesses, but merely crosses, always in a pack, a group, or a cluster' (123). Thus, like becoming-woman, becoming-animal is another means of resisting cultural hegemony; it means thinking outside the individual human or the anthropocentric. Baker emphasises that becoming 'is more than just [Deleuze and Guattari's] own variation on the poststructuralist theme of decentring of the subject; it is a full-blown doing away with the subject and all of its associated philosophical and psychoanalytical baggage' (103). Therefore, it seems to offer the greatest possible distance from the acceptance of the centre and its marginalisation of victims. As will be suggested, some of Atwood's protagonists do approach this on occasion.

However, there is some tension in Atwood's novels between this sense of near-collectivity and what M. H. Abrams calls 'identity theory,' in which the approach to subjectivity seems to occupy a space between humanism and poststructuralism.

> Like traditional humanists, identity theorists reject the extreme poststructural claims that the human subject is no more than a social construction or textual effect, and replace the subject – as a particular sexual, gender-specific or ethnic identity – at the center of the scene of writing, interpretation, and political action. In opposition to traditional humanists, on the other hand, identity theorists emphasize the identity of the subject as a representative of one or another group, rather than as a representative of universal humanity (Abrams, 118).

Nick Mansfield's explanation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's attitudes regarding the Subaltern Studies group effectively articulates the problem faced by identity theorists. He says that Spivak

> ...brings their [the group's] conceptions of the colonial subject into contact with the decomposed and deconstructed subject of the postmodern West ...the post-structuralist paradigm of a fragmented and unstable subject that has become so favoured in Western countries refuses to recognise the specificity of the situation of the colonised subject (126).

The response to this on the part of the Subaltern Studies group is consistent with identity theory: '...the political action of an oppressed social group is represented as if it is the coherent action of a single collective subject' (Mansfield, 126). Similarly, Hutcheon notes in *Splitting Images* that discourses such as feminism and postcolonialism have their own agendas, in which a particular group takes priority because of marginalisation. She writes: 'The current poststructuralist/ postmodern challenges to the coherent, autonomous self or subject have to be put on hold in feminist and post-colonial discourses, for these must work first to assert and affirm a denied or alienated subjectivity' (70-71).

The idea of identity theory, then, goes some way towards explaining what happens in Atwood's Victim Positions, as defined above, and her attempt to apply these generally. While the protagonists' triangular identification with the margins extends almost to poststructuralism at times, and in *Surfacing* does indeed challenge notions of coherent subjectivity, there is also a strong need for individual victims to liberate themselves through self-discovery. However, although identity theory provides an explanation of what happens to subjectivity in these novels, it is an idea that shares the aforementioned problems of generalisation. As Mansfield observes, 'There are obvious problems with this way of representing a mobile population: internal differences are suppressed in the name of a single program of action which automatically ranks participants as more or less loyal, more or less attuned to the collective project' (126). This is something which I deal with in later chapters.

The various ideas that I have outlined in this introduction are treated in my thesis via a two-part structure. My individual chapters follow, roughly, the sequence of Atwood's Victim Positions, with the exception of chapter five. The chapters also fall into two sections that are in a kind of dialogue with one another. Section one (chapters two and three) addresses Atwood's novels in terms of her own theories of Canadian literature, looking at the role of animals in terms of her suggestion that parallels with others can facilitate a victim's self-knowledge and thus the movement through the Victim Positions. These first two chapters deal with Atwood's animals as they appear in motifs of hunting and appropriation. Both chapters focus on the significance of

triangular identification for her Position Two, the awareness of victimhood. However, since Atwood believes that her theories apply to all victims and to all of Canada, it is unsurprising to find them at work in her own novels, and therefore unproductive to limit the discussion to her viewpoint. I move beyond Atwood's ideas in section two, looking at the later Victim Positions in terms of some of the problems that are raised by her approach. Especially later in their de-victimisation, the characterisation of the protagonists simultaneously questions the boundaries between the centre and the margins and asserts the possibility of movement from one to the other, in a way that seems to have something in common with poststructuralism. I address the novels in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming; chapter four explores the way both triangular identification and Atwood's Victim Positions seem to mutate and even to undermine themselves, especially with regard to animals. I argue that, on the one hand, the protagonists' attainment of Positions Three and Four leads them to undermine centre-margin structures as they blur the distinctions between victim and oppressor, and yet, on the other hand, their de-victimisation seems to lead them toward more integrated notions of self. This paradox can be explained by the application of identity theory, but this raises other problems. Therefore, by way of conclusion, chapter five looks at the politics of Atwood's use of animals in her literature, especially in terms of the ideas of theorists like John Simons, in an attempt to address the implications from the point of view of animal discourse more generally.

SECTION ONE

2. Hunting

'Wolves in one form or another... All stories are about wolves'

-The Blind Assassin

One of the roles that animals play in *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin* is to participate in hunting motifs, either metaphorically or in the diegesis of the novels. In this chapter, I explore the different ways in which Atwood uses animals in hunting. My discussion follows the various forms of hunting that appear in these novels: the hunt as carried out by animal predators (usually a metaphor in these novels), and the hunt as carried out by humans, who hunt other animals either to kill or, in a related sport, to photograph the target. In all cases, Atwood uses the hunt to illustrate power relations; she characterises her protagonists as victims by making hunters represent anthropocentrism, androcentrism and colonialism or ethnocentrism. Animals within hunting thus illustrate the links between gender, cultural and species marginalisation which together form triangular identification and facilitate the de-victimisation process.

In *Survival*, Atwood uses her nation's literature as a means of understanding its identity, and Canadian literature suggests to her that nature is a significant element in the construction of Canadian culture. 'Nature seen as dead, or alive but indifferent, or alive and actively hostile ... is a common image in Canadian literature' (54). She argues that it is common to find instances of what she calls 'Death by Nature,' when 'something in the natural environment murders the individual' (54). Natural causes of death often include drowning and freezing, and can include 'Death by Bushing, in which a character isolated in Nature goes crazy' (55). Atwood observes that, given this sort of natural environment, one might expect nonhuman animals to be dangerous also. However, 'For reasons which have to do with the profundities of the Canadian psyche, Death by Wild Animal is infrequent' (55). She writes that Canadian animal stories 'are about animals *being* killed, as felt emotionally from inside the fur and feathers' (74). Atwood therefore considers it likely that Canadians identify with animals as victims (79).

In Atwood's own novels, although nature appears hostile and characters drown and suffer 'bushing,' nonhuman animals are unlikely to be a threat. The animal predators in *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and especially *The Blind Assassin* tend to be figurative; they appear as part of the negative characterisation of humans. On the other hand, animal victims appear both figuratively and in the diegesis of the novels. In all three novels, hunting is a significant instance of animal content, including several possible predator-prey arrangements. The hunter can be

human or nonhuman, as can the prey, which means that Atwood's protagonists are not bound to remain victims in hunting motifs. Initially, however, the protagonists do appear in these terms within hunting.

Victims

The importance of Atwood's use of hunting motifs lies in their contribution to the characterisation of the protagonists as victims. Atwood's explanation of the Victim Positions in *Survival* makes it clear that in order to move through the phases towards non-victimhood, it is necessary to recognise the fact that one is a victim. According to Atwood, victims who are in Position One deny their victimhood, whereas in Position Two, they acknowledge the fact that they are victims, even if they displace the cause of it and consider it inevitable (1972, 37). Either because they are unaware of their marginalised position, or because they deny it, each of Atwood's protagonists occupies Position One early in the novel or in the novel's past.

In *Surfacing*, the unnamed protagonist puts up with androcentric and anthropocentric victimisation, of herself and of others. She allows men to oppress her. She remembers letting her previous partner persuade her to have an abortion. 'He said I should do it, he made me do it; he talked about it as though it was legal, simple, like getting a wart removed ... I could have said no but I didn't; that made me one of them too, a killer' (138-39). Early in the novel, David admires her and criticises his wife, saying, "I like it round and firm and fully packed. Anna, you're eating too much" (92). The protagonist seems to deny this victimisation by explaining it away. When Anna accuses her, "I guess you think he's hot for you ... those things he says" she replies, "I thought he was teasing" (92). She also accepts anthropocentrism at first, and abets David in his fishing. 'When nothing happens I tell him to reel in ... I take out the little frog, the ultimate solution, and hook it on securely while it squeaks... "God you're cold-blooded," Anna says' (58). The protagonist seems to agree with Anna, thinking, 'Other people always did that for me' (58). So far, however, she contributes to human sport despite her sense of affinity with animals. Thus, in terms of gender and in terms of species, she ignores the fact that when she sacrifices her own values, she accepts victim roles as applied to her and to other women and animals.

Marian, the protagonist of *The Edible Woman*, is initially in a more or less independent position. She is in a relationship, but this does not seem to oppress her. She becomes a victim only when she becomes engaged to Peter. Her sense of control crumbles and she cedes authority towards him even when he does not seek it. 'She had fallen into the habit ... of letting him

choose for her' (147). She cannot go through with her first impulse to answer "groundhog day" when he asks her to choose a date for their wedding; instead, 'I heard a soft flannelly voice I barely recognized, saying, "I'd rather have you decide that. I'd rather leave the big decisions up to you." I was astounded at myself. I'd never said anything remotely like that to him before' (90). She also allows him to make suggestions about her wardrobe and her hair, even when these are contrary to her wishes (208). Meanwhile, her body starts to take over, and she goes into a kind of hunger strike over which she seems to have no control at all.

Iris, the protagonist of *The Blind Assassin*, is admittedly in less of a position to resist than the other two protagonists. This novel is set before second wave feminism, which means that female resistance of male power is presented as less socially acceptable and is unlikely to be suggested or supported. Moreover, Iris is trapped by the knowledge that her father's business is foundering and she is his only bargaining piece. 'I was cornered. It wasn't as if I had any alternatives to propose' (276). It is in this way that she is trapped into her marriage with Richard, who, along with his sister Winifred, takes an even more proprietary attitude to her, manipulating and limiting her actions and her relationships with the rest of her family. However, even after her father has died and she becomes aware that Richard has not fulfilled his side of the bargain, she stays in the marriage rather than escaping it until it is too late for her sister Laura.

Thus, as escape from victimhood is desirable to all three protagonists, it is imperative that they recognise their victimhood, in order to proceed any further. In *Survival*, Atwood herself implies that 'seeing yourself as a victimised animal' (81) is a way of 'naming your condition, as the crucial step from the ignorance of Position One' (81). Animals in these novels contribute to this acknowledgement of victimhood, although in *The Blind Assassin*, Iris's retrospective knowledge of her position means that animals rather illustrate her memory of it (which may explain her concentration on metaphoric animals). Even when they are not directly targeted by hunting, the protagonists of each novel are aware of it and are disturbed by it, because of a growing awareness of parallel experience with other animals. In this way, hunting elucidates (both for the reader and for the protagonists) the extent to which the protagonists are also victims of various kinds of oppression.

Predators

In *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, animal predators appear as a threat to humans, but this is not part of 'death by Nature,' as Atwood calls it. If an animal appears in a threatening role, the chances are that in fact, the predatory nonhuman actually represents hostile, predatory

humanity. Carnivores are frequently used in hunting metaphors, because they are considered more predator than prey; they are less likely to be hunted by nonhuman animals than omnivores or herbivores. Canine, feline and reptile predators are common examples used in Atwood's work. Such species can and do carry various connotations in human culture, but it is their perceived capacity for violence that Atwood is making use of in these two novels.

The Blind Assassin's protagonist, Iris Chase, is married off to Richard Griffen. He and his sister Winifred represent a significant predatory element in the novel (and the choice of surnames here is unlikely to be coincidental). They exploit others by means of their social and financial power, and in Richard's case, this exploitation extends to sexual manipulation too. Their victims include the Chase family, and Iris repeatedly characterises them in terms of animal predators including cats, wolves and reptiles. At one point, she describes her situation using a cat-and-mouse structure. 'I thought I could cope with Richard, with Winifred. I thought I could live like a mouse in the castle of the tigers, by creeping around out of sight ... No: I give myself too much credit, I didn't see the danger. I didn't even know they were tigers' (402).

Canines can be used the same way. Iris's lover, Alex, says to her,

> "I like my stories to be true to life, which means there have to be wolves in them. Wolves in one form or another... All stories are about wolves... There's escaping from the wolves, fighting the wolves, capturing the wolves, taming the wolves. Being thrown to the wolves, or throwing others to the wolves so the wolves will eat them instead of you. Running with the wolf pack. Turning into a wolf" (424).

This passage emphasises that in animal metaphors, one species can be used in multiple ways once its meaning has been established. Canines are not inherently threatening; Iris wants to domesticate the wolves in Alex's story (422), but his refusal to change their meaning matches the fact that what wolves usually represent in *The Blind Assassin* is a threat. Outside Alex's stories, wolves appear only in a symbolic capacity, to illustrate the power relations between humans. Of course, this is the way they are used in relation to Richard and Winifred. Iris realises that she left herself open to victimisation when young; that she was a danger to herself, 'in the way sheep are, I now suppose. So dumb they jeopardize themselves, and get stuck on cliffs or cornered by wolves' (297).

Canine predator metaphors also appear in *The Edible Woman* as part of gendered pursuit. Matt Cartmill explains that although earlier literary connections between romance and the hunt

often depict noble courtship, 'When later writers compare love to hunting, they often ... follow Shakespeare in making hunting a metaphor for rape' (81). Marti Kheel suggests that 'Both the hunt and the sexual act are premised on the notion of the buildup of tension; the orgasm and the kill provide the sought-after relief' (91), and this has occasioned many literary parallels between them. It is indeed cruelty that is the most salient characteristic of Atwood's sexual hunters, both male and female. In *The Edible Woman*, Marian's friend Ainsley seduces Leonard (Len), for the purposes of procreation. She comes to dinner with them uninvited, and when the restaurant closes, Marian notices that 'Ainsley had cut Len out from the herd' (71), a hunting technique which both humans and other animals use. When Len finds out that he is the father of Ainsley's child, not because he has seduced her, as he thought, but the reverse, he feels that he has encountered dangerous canines. As he flees down the stairs from Marian and Ainsley's flat, the landlady and her guests emerge from below. 'Retreat was impossible. He was surrounded by the enemy' (215). He panics. '"All you clawed scaly ... predatory ... bitches can go straight to hell!" ... "You'll never get me!" he screamed' (215).

Which species Len means when he says 'scaly' is unclear, but there are some scaled predator images in *The Edible Woman* which might fit. The mythological woman-animal hybrids of the mermaid and the frequently associated siren were both thought to lure men, by enchantment, to their deaths. Although sirens and mermaids are imaginary and part human, their nonhuman side seems to strengthen their predatory potential, and in *The Edible Woman*, they are a danger to Len and to men like him. When Marian learns that Peter's friend Trigger is engaged, much to Peter's distress, she is worried that Peter will 'start seeing me ... as a version of the designing siren who had carried off Trigger' (27). Later, Marian likens Ainsley to 'a mermaid perched on a rock' (83) as she sits at the table, which suggests, again, doom to men. This turns out to be a justified image of Ainsley, given what she is doing at the time. 'She had taken the calendar down from the kitchen wall ... and was making cryptic marks on it with a pencil' (84). She says, 'I'm figuring out my strategy' (85), meaning that she is working out when best to seduce Len in order to conceive.

Scales appear frequently in *The Blind Assassin* too, characterising Winifred and Richard as cold-blooded reptile-like killers. Winifred has reptilian accessories, which are seen as proof of her predatory nature.[1] She has 'green alligator shoes ... glossy, rubbery, slightly wet-looking, like lily pads' (282), a green hat 'like a poisonous cake' (both colour and poison being associated with

[1] Of course, Winifred might also be considered a threat *to* alligators here, but Iris does not seem to read her accessories this way.

snakes), and 'a shiny green alligator purse' (282). Richard, Iris says, is 'alarming to me during his moments of levity ... it was like watching a lizard gambol' (520). Whether Iris, in relation to reptiles, conceives of herself as human or nonhuman, she clearly sees herself as their prey. Again, Alex's science fiction conceptually reflects the larger diegetic structure of the novel. His Lizard Men are exploitative, sexual predators, 'seven feet tall, scaly, and grey. Their eyes had vertical slits, like the eyes of cats or snakes... [T]heir plan was to capture a large number of Earth women and breed a super-race' (429).

In another, very different species choice, spiders also appear as predators in both *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, because of their use of webs to trap their prey. In both novels, this seems to be a kind of hunting more attributed to women than to men. In *The Blind Assassin*, Winifred describes Richard's previous relationships as '*entanglements*, like nets, or webs, or snares' (284, Atwood's emphasis). Hearing this, Iris is 'unsure of where I myself was assumed to stand. Was I one of the sticky entanglers? Perhaps' (284). Certainly, Iris makes Richard and Winifred's lives increasingly complicated, over time. However, she says, 'I couldn't imagine him in peril' (284). In *The Edible Woman*, Len is not exactly in danger either, but he is very upset by his position, and Marian sees him as a spider's victim. He is 'like a white grub suddenly unearthed from its burrow and exposed to the light of day... His shell had not been as thick and calloused as she had imagined' (160). As Ainsley tries to comfort him, 'Her hair fell down ... like a veil, or, Marian thought, a web' (160). When he tries to escape, it is no coincidence that he is 'halted by the spinning-wheel on the landing. He was temporarily snarled in it, and tugged and swore loudly' (214). The spinning wheel, which presumably belongs to the landlady, unites the images of women and spiders which follows: 'By the time he was able to start down the next flight of stairs ... all the ladies, as alert to the symptoms of wickedness as a spider to the vibrations of its web, had come fluttering out of the parlour...'(214).

Thus, predator animals are being used in these novels in terms of the meanings that humans typically impose upon them. From Atwood's point of view, symbolic animal predators are a very effective literary schema, because they clearly illustrate the protagonists' victimisation. The elements of human relations which Atwood's predator metaphors illustrate are 'uncivilised' characteristics. In terms of connotation, canines and reptiles stand for human ruthlessness (hence the term 'cold-blooded') and spiders for scheming entrapment, and Atwood is applying these ideas to social and sexual domination. In naturalist writing, as in psychoanalysis, when sexual or social brutality is figured in terms of animality, there is an implication that these characteristics are inherent in 'human nature.' Naturalism takes a deterministic view of humans as animals,

'whose character and behavior are entirely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity and environment. A person inherits compulsive instincts – especially hunger, the drive to accumulate possessions, and sexuality' (Abrams, 261). Similarly, in psychoanalysis, animals have often been used to symbolise involuntary human drives, 'as a property of the unconscious or nonrational dimension of being' (Lippit, 94). Conversely, having 'human' or 'humane' qualities is to display mercy and warmth. In this way, the use of other animals in predator metaphors somewhat displaces 'irrational' characteristics from the human species to other animals.

Hunters

Atwood's humans are not always identified with predatory animals in order to convey brutality, however. Instead, brutality can be seen as a trait of humanity. This means that rather than being associated with the oppressor, other animals can occupy the other side of the hunting motif, as the victims. According to Cartmill, human hunting 'is intelligible only as symbolic behavior, like a game or a religious ceremony, and the emotions that the hunt arouses can be understood only in symbolic terms' (29). He defines (human) hunting as

> the deliberate, direct, violent killing of unrestrained wild animals; and we define wild animals in this context as those that shun or attack human beings. The hunt is thus by definition an armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature. Because it involves confrontational, premeditated, and violent killing, it represents something like a war waged by humanity against the wilderness (30).

The Edible Woman's Peter and *Surfacing*'s David are aligned with hunter culture, and Joe tends to follow where David leads. However, their hunting is not represented in terms of animal predators; they are human hunters, and their human victims are therefore likely to identify with animal prey.

Cartmill writes that the symbolic interpretation of hunting depends on cultural context. In *The Edible Woman*, one interpretation of hunting is usefully introduced in the form of a radio advertising campaign for 'Moose Beer.' '*Any real man, on a real man's holiday – hunting, fishing, or just plain old relaxing – needs a beer with a healthy, hearty taste, a deep down manly flavour*' (26). Marian explains further.

> The label was to have a pair of antlers with a gun and fishing-rod crossed beneath them. The singing commercial was a reinforcement of this theme; I didn't think it was very original but I admired the subtlety of 'just plain old-fashioned relaxing.' That was so the average beer-drinker, the slope-shouldered pot-bellied kind, would be able to feel a mystical identity with the plaid-jacketed sportsman shown in the pictures with his foot on a deer or scooping a trout into his net (26).

Thus, hunting is interpreted in this advertisement as a masculine recreation involving the (meritorious) conquest of nature.

As *The Edible Woman* develops, Marian becomes hypersensitive to hunting. She knows that Peter has engaged in hunting in the past, but this is not significant in her view of him because 'He never told me much about it' (69). However, in an animated conversation with Len, Peter gives a graphic description of shooting and dismembering a rabbit. Marian is disturbed by this.

> [M]y mind withdrew, concentrating instead on the picture of the scene in the forest ... Peter stood with his back to me in a plaid shirt, his rifle slung on his shoulder. A group of friends, those friends whom I had never met, were gathered around him, their faces clearly visible ... splashed with blood, the mouths wrenched with laughter. I couldn't see the rabbit (69).

Marian's reaction causes James Polk to observe, 'In recent Canadian fiction, the protagonists often seem to be copying their survival techniques directly from the animals' (58). Polk's example for this is questionable. 'While her fiancé brags of his hunting prowess, the heroine of Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* crouches in the Ladies', feeling a kinship with a roll of toilet paper which is described as "helpless and white and furry, passively waiting for the end"' (Atwood in Polk, 58). While Marian does seem to be empathising with the toilet paper here, it seems like an interpretative stretch on Polk's part to decide that she is *copying animal survival techniques* by doing so. The references to fur, helplessness and passivity seem to spell animality, but 'waiting for the end' is not a survival technique, it is an acceptance of death. Elsewhere, however, Marian does seem to copy some survival instincts from other species. Having heard Peter's hunting story, Marian now begins to believe in a predator-prey dynamic in her relationship with him; thus, the idea of gendered pursuit present in Ainsley's predatory behaviour also features in terms of a non-animalised male hunter. Later that night, Marian tries to flee from

Peter, and when Len comes after her instead, 'This disturbed me – I must have been expecting Peter to chase me' (72). She is relieved when he does eventually catch her (74). Although initially, this seems like a fantasy which she chooses to enact, Peter *is* a hunter, and Marian's acknowledgement of this soon grows to dominate her perception of him. She increasingly sees Peter as an animal quarry might see a human pursuer. She is worried that the red dress which he has encouraged her to buy 'made her a perfect target' (244), and it certainly contrasts with her own prey-like instincts to 'choose clothes as though they're a camouflage or protective colouration' (13-14). She has an irresistible instinct to flee from his party. 'Behind her even now Peter might be tracing, following, stalking her through the crisp empty streets as he had stalked his guests in the living room, waiting for the exact moment' (245-46). Although prey animals do not often appear in this novel, Marian, like the other protagonists of these narratives, views hunting tendencies not as heroic, but as evidence of a threat.

Hunters often represent a threat to women in these novels, but as with predators, this can be reversed. Peter is distressed at the marriage of his (male) friend Trigger, whose nickname seems to come from hunting and photography but who has ironically become the hunted, according to Peter.

> He continued in a disjointed monologue in which Trigger was made to sound like ... the last of the dinosaurs, destroyed by fate and lesser species, and the last of the dodos, too dumb to get away. Then he attacked the bride, accusing her of being predatory and malicious and sucking poor Trigger into the domestic void (64).

Whether there is any justification for this view of Trigger's relationship is not made clear, because Marian, and therefore the reader, does not meet this couple during the novel. Peter finds Marian's lack of response to be evidence of understanding (when in fact she has already discovered that reasoning with him is unhelpful), but certainly, Marian does not reserve prey-status for women. Several of her female friends are described in hunting terms. For instance, there is extended imagery of Lucy as a fishing lure. Like Ainsley, who has such success with the ploy, Lucy hunts men through the deceit of letting them believe that they are hunting her. Marian describes her in fishing terms:

> ...trailing herself like a many-plumed fish-lure with glass beads and three spinners and seventeen hooks through the likely-looking places, good restaurants and cocktail bars

> with their lush weed-beds of potted philodendrons, where the right kind of men might be expected to be lurking, ravenous as pike, though more maritally inclined (112).

Marian does not comment on this directly, although her use of the metaphor seems ironic or disapproving. Although she tries hard not to interfere, she definitely objects to Ainsley's overtly exploitative plot, telling her, "it doesn't seem ethical. It's like bird liming, or spearing fish by lantern or something" (70).

In *Surfacing*, female characters are not aligned with hunting in this way: even when the protagonist helps others to fish, and clearly knows how to, she has qualms about hunting and later refuses to help. David, however, has no qualms at all. He buys into hunter-images very like that of *The Edible Woman*'s Moose Beer advertisement. Anna also suggests that "David thinks he's a great white hunter" (23). This image evokes colonialism, especially in the context of Africa and India. As Cartmill explains, 'The imperial hunt ... appealed to a wide audience as a token of the white man's dominion over the jungle creatures' (136). '[T]here emerged a new mythic stereotype: the Great White Hunter ... an upper-class white man wearing a conspicuously "civilised" costume, who leads an army of servile natives on a foray into the bush to kill for thrills, glory, and trophies' (Cartmill, 137). Whether David actually sees himself in terms of all these cultural images seems unlikely, but he is certainly keen for thrills, glory and trophies. Having heard of elusive fish in the lake, he promptly procures a fishing license and announces, "I'm gonna get me one of them smart fish" (23). However, David and Joe are not hunters in the way that Peter is; they are amateurs. They do not even begin with fishing, but with a kind of proto-hunting. 'David and Joe appeared in the long grass outside the fence, one at either end of a thinnish log. They were proud, they'd caught something. The log was notched in many places as though they'd attacked it' (75). That it is thin and heavily notched demonstrates that they are not even adept as woodcutters. When they do fish, their attempts might be equally futile were it not for the narrator, who catches and pierces a frog as bait and kills the fish for them. 'David swipes at it, misses... It flops towards me and I step down on it with my foot and grab the knife and whack it quickly with the knife handle' (59).

Thus, David and Joe are not very dangerous hunters in practice, but the associated ideas of glorified violence and victimisation of the Other represent a complex threat. The protagonist's triangular identification, her sense of herself as Canadian, as female and as animal, is repeatedly symbolised in her reactions to a dead heron, left by another hunting party. '[I]t was hanging upside down by a thin blue nylon rope tied round its feet and looped over a tree branch, its wings

fallen open. It looked at me with its mashed eye' (109). The heron becomes an important victim symbol for her, because it stands for multiple instances of exploitation. Repeatedly, the narrator tries to understand the meanings behind the heron's death.

> Why had they strung it up like a lynch victim...? To prove they could do it, they had the power to kill. Otherwise it was valueless: beautiful from a distance but it couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk, the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it. Food, slave or corpse, limited choices; horned and fanged heads sawn off and mounted on the billiard room wall, stuffed fish, trophies (110-11).

The reason is probably that the heron represents something against which its killers want to define themselves; its slaughter is the opposite of identification, and can be read in terms of gender, colonialism and anthropocentrism. One meaning of the heron is as a representative of the victims of white, United States Americans, a point hinted at by the protagonist's references to lynching and slavery, historically common fates for African Americans. This connects to the protagonist's view of Canada as a victim too, and she initially assumes that the killers of the heron, a fishing party that she has seen on the lake, are 'Americans.' In a rather generalising statement, Atwood suggests that 'American' animal stories are hunting stories in which 'the hunter wishes to match himself against them [other animals], conquer them by killing them ... thus "winning" over Nature and enhancing his own stature' (1972, 74). She claims that these animal stories are therefore 'a comment on the general imperialism of the American cast of mind' (1972, 74). What she means by this is white, United States Americans, but this is never overtly stated; it is taken as a given. *Surfacing*'s narrator, perhaps not surprisingly, seems to feel this way about white Americans too, but such assumptions are belied as the novel shows white Canadians acting the same way. When the 'Americans' in the novel turn out to be Canadians too, it becomes clear that what the narrator means by America is the desire for conquest over nature. They may be Canadian, 'But they'd killed the heron anyway. It doesn't matter what country they're from, my head said, they're still Americans, they're what's in store for us, what we are turning into' (123). What she seems to mean is that these white Canadians are eliding any distinction between themselves and this apparently United States mindset, and the heron may therefore represent a Canadian part of themselves that they are denying.

In another interpretation of the heron, Robert McKay, whose article insists on an equation of the bodily with the female, emphasises the heron's physicality as a connection with women.

He suggests, 'it is the *smell* [of the dead heron] that profoundly acts upon the body of the narrator and prepares her for an ethical relationship with the animal' (214). Perhaps a more direct link to the oppressed female is the one suggested by David. He connects violated animals to women when he tells the narrator that a 'split' beaver represents female genitalia (113). McKay also recognises this moment: 'In [David's] jocund collocation of woman and animal the bodilessness of female genitalia and the animal itself are both repressed, even symbolically butchered, in a misogynistic and speciesist configuration of the self' (216). Hearing this, the narrator muses, 'A part of the body, a dead animal. I wondered what part of them the heron was, that they needed so much to kill it' (113). As McKay puts it, this entails a recognition 'that the killing and display of the heron has a primarily *sacrificial* function; it provides the hunters with an object onto which they can project the unwanted part of themselves' (216). However, he does not propose an answer to the protagonist's question. I would suggest that in this self-rejection, there is another instance of anthropocentrism overlapping with androcentrism, and possibly colonialism. Given the status of the beaver, the heron could represent femaleness in its killers, which they try to negate through violence towards the nonhuman, or which they hunt because they desire it. The protagonist remembers finding graffiti of genitals as a child, and now realises, 'they were magic drawings like the ones in caves. You draw on the wall what's important to you, what you're hunting' (114).

Another potentially unwanted part of the human self is of course animality. The heron may also be seen to represent an animal part of its killers which they have attempted to cancel in order to affirm their own humanity. The protagonist is afraid of having done the same; of having cancelled an animal part of herself in her abortion. 'He said it wasn't a person, only an animal; I should have seen that was no different' (138-39). The protagonist's reaction to the heron's animal victimhood is iterated when she embraces her own animality later in the novel. She is afraid of suffering the same fate as the heron: 'if they guess my true form, identity, they will shoot me or bludgeon in my skull and hang me up by the feet from a tree' (177).

David's response to the heron adds another dimension to these forms of violence. He reads it as its killers must have done; in terms of its symbolic value. Whether for him it represents femininity, Canada or animality, his reaction confirms that it is an Other, against which to define himself. However, he does not cancel it further; instead, he takes a record of its death for himself. '"We need that," David said, "we can put it next to the fish guts ... it looks so great, you have to admit"' (110). This puts the heron into the category of trophy. He has caught the fish himself and filmed its entrails as a symbol of his triumph, and even though he has not

killed the heron, his appropriation of its death demonstrates support for its cancellation and a desire to partake of anthropocentric dominion.

Cameramen

By using the camera against the Other, David also emphasises the link between hunting and photography, a link that Atwood makes use of in both *Surfacing* and *The Edible Woman*. Male characters in these novels engage in photography in ways that are intimately connected with the hunt. Two forms of photography are significant here: hunting photography and human photography. The former is the practice of photography as an aspect of hunting 'to kill.' James Ryan explores the relationship between the two pursuits in his essay 'Hunting with the camera.' He explains:

> From the late 1850s, explorers, soldiers, administrators and professional hunters began to employ the camera to record images of animals, skins and horns for purposes of scientific documentation and as evidence of their hunting achievements. For many hunters, photography, alongside the related practice of taxidermy, was a convenient means of recording hunting trophies for lectures, books and personal, private collections (206).

Although human photography is not fatal to the subject, it is frequently associated with hunting and with trophies. Susan Sontag writes that

> ...a camera is sold as a predatory weapon – one that's as automated as possible, ready to spring ... there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed (14).

Thus, the photography of humans, just like the photography of trophies, can be interpreted as objectification and appropriation. Sontag gives a useful description of the idea of the photograph that steals the soul. She writes, 'As everyone knows, primitive people fear that the camera will rob them of some part of their being' (158), but 'Few people in this society share the primitive dread of cameras that comes from thinking of the photograph as a material part of themselves' (160-161). However, Marina Warner considers this sort of idea differently. Looking at Western

beliefs about shadows, reflections and other likenesses, she argues that such beliefs are in fact widespread across cultures. This leads her to suggest,

> The myth that the camera steals the soul may turn out not to be a myth in the colloquial sense of delusion. It may be a myth in the sense of deeper truth, a fiction with greater power to illuminate the workings of the psyche, however irrational its foundation (n.pag.).

She cites Elizabeth Edwards, who suggests that such beliefs sometimes have real foundation in cultural relations, particularly in the context of colonialism.

> In many ways those people who feared the camera would steal their souls, would peel their faces were right. The camera was one of those instruments of appropriation, which recorded culture at the colonial periphery and removed it for analysis . . . in the metropolitan centres. Culture and histories became not what they were to the people themselves, but how they were defined and analysed externally (Edwards in Warner, n.pag.).

Thus, the appropriation suggested by photography is linked to the tendency of the culturally powerful speculatively to define those groups that are its Other, and as such, it is feared as an implement of domination.

In this way, anthropocentric and colonial attitudes to Otherness can be seen to overlap in photographic hunting. In both *Surfacing* and *The Edible Woman*, photography features in the sense of hunting, and its capacity for victimisation and appropriation is, like other forms of hunting, significant to gender relations too. In *Surfacing*, hunting with the camera is the kind of hunting at which David and Joe are most proficient. Their project during the trip is to film a series of images to be edited together and called *Random Samples*. The name implies that they are collecting specimens or trophies, again like the Great White Hunter. They find and film three stuffed moose, appropriating animals that are already redefined by anthropomorphism, 'dressed in human clothes and wired standing up on their hind legs' (7).[2] They film their log of firewood also, just as if they were hunting with the camera, photographing animal prey. '... they stuck the axe in the log, after several tries, and took turns shooting each other standing beside it, arms

[2] It is not clear whether these are instances of trophy taxidermy or have been made by humans.

folded and one foot on it as if it was a lion or a rhinoceros' (75). David also makes a sexual photographic attack on Anna, insisting that she appear naked on film. He grapples with her, saying, "Now just take it off like a good girl or I'll have to take it off for you" (129), and telling Joe to shoot. 'Joe swivelled the camera and trained it on them like a bazooka or a strange instrument of torture' (129-130). In a striking image of violence, the narrator sees Anna as if dismembered, 'cut in half, one breast on either side of a thin tree' (130). Anna jumps into the lake to get away, but she is captured on film. Thus, the camera documents the humiliating control David exercises over Anna's body; it therefore perpetuates the abuse that characterises their marriage both as a form of attack and as a record of it.

In his relationship with Marian, *The Edible Woman*'s Peter is a slightly more sympathetic character than David. He certainly tries to photograph Marian and to show her off, but this could be interpreted as misdirected pride. Unlike David, Peter is not manipulative or misogynistic. It is the fact that he is a hunter-photographer that fuels Marian's paranoia. As Jennifer Hobgood explains, 'Peter is a hunter and novice photographer, and throughout her interaction with him in Part I Marian experiences an escalating anxiety, a paranoid fantasy of being hunted and captured' (n.pag.). The association between hunting and photography is first introduced as Marian looks over Peter's 'weapons': 'two rifles, a pistol, and several wicked-looking knives ... Peter's cameras hang there too, their glass eyes covered by leather cases' (59). In fact, Peter has indeed used these implements simultaneously. In his hunting story, as told to Len, he and his friends photographed the rabbit in order to have a record of it, in other words, to have a trophy. "Lucky thing me and Trigger had the old cameras along, we got some good shots of the whole mess" (69).

Despite Hobgood's limitation of Marian's paranoia to Part I, it continues until the end of Part II. The threat of photography is confirmed during the central section when Peter starts to focus the camera on Marian. When he wants to take a photograph of her, 'the suggestion made her unreasonably anxious' (231).

> Her body had frozen, gone rigid. She couldn't move, she couldn't even move the muscles of her face as she stood and stared into the round glass lens pointing towards her, she wanted to tell him not to touch the shutter release but she couldn't move...(232).

When they are interrupted, 'Marian came slowly from the corner. She was breathing quickly. She reached out one hand, forcing herself to touch it. "What's the matter with me?" she said to

herself. "It's only a camera"' (232). Although Sontag argues that a camera is not actually lethal (14), Marian says of Peter, 'That dark intent marksman with his aiming eye had been there all the time, hidden by the other layers, waiting for her at the dead centre: a homicidal maniac with a lethal weapon in his hands' (246). According to Hobgood, the camera is a threat to Marian because it represents the gaze. 'As their relationship progresses toward engagement, Peter's gaze and the imagined gaze of power threaten Marian' (n.pag.). However, I would suggest that although the gaze is part of it, the threat is greater than this. The camera seems, to Marian, to be a means of trapping and appropriating her. Sontag writes: 'Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still' (163), and Marian is afraid that 'Once he pulled the trigger she would be stopped, fixed indissolubly in that gesture, that single stance, unable to move or change' (245). Moreover, as Celia Lury observes, 'while the photograph offers the possibility of the merging of subject and object, it sometimes – commonly – happens that the subject of the photograph is objectified in the conventions of possessive individualism' (77). This is what has happened in the trophy photography of the rabbit, and this is exactly how Marian sees marriage, too, so the fact that it is her fiancé taking the photographs is combined threat, which is too much for her. Thus, the many parallels that she has come to perceive between herself and the hunter-photographer's target convince Marian of her own victim status.

Like other forms of hunting, the use of the camera unites the various forms of marginalised identity with which the protagonists empathise. As shown by Ryan and Warner, photography was something that frequently took place as part of colonisation, as the coloniser tried to appropriate new environments and cultures. David and Joe's concept of *Random Samples* works in a similar way. In both cases, the objectification involved can also have an impact on gender relations, as is shown by David and Peter's attempts to photograph their partners. The connection to animals as targets means that again, animal victims are in a parallel position to the colony or the colonised, and to objectified women, so that photography too links the three areas of marginalisation that make up triangular identification.

Thus, Atwood uses the hunt, both metaphorically and otherwise, with its associated animals, activities and images, as a way to illustrate multiple instances of victimhood. Oppressive hunter figures appear either in armed anthropomorphic form, or in terms of non-human predators like the wolf and the reptile. There is in each case a sexual element to the hunt, including real violence in *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*. In all three novels, the female protagonist identifies with the (animal) victim of the hunt, and this identification emphasises her

own victimhood, even if the exact nature of that victimhood is not clarified by the hunt. Thus, triangular identification comes into play, as the means by which each protagonist acknowledges (or in Iris's case, remembers) her victimisation, and enters Position Two, beginning the journey through the victim positions in the search for non-victimhood. However, the hunt is not the end of the metaphor. The following chapter concerns what happens in these novels when the metaphor develops, as the hunt is realised in the capture and appropriation of the quarry.

3. Appropriation

'he'll assimilate her – make her part of himself, forever'

- The Blind Assassin

Possessing the Other

The predator-prey structure addressed in the previous chapter often finds its logical conclusion in some form of appropriation of the prey. This chapter is concerned with the ways in which triangular identification again helps the protagonists to recognise their marginalisation and its cause, as parallels with the appropriation of colonies or other animals underline the position of the protagonists as appropriated victims within established power relations. In terms of Atwood's Victim Positions, this places them in Positions Two and Three. When appropriated, the protagonists are likely to be aware of their victim status without really finding a means of escape, which is Atwood's definition of Position Two. They can probably identify the external cause of their victimhood (the 'hunter' or 'proprietor'), which is part of Position Three. In Position Three, victims should also recognise the internal cause of their victimisation. As Linda Hutcheon observes, 'Atwood's ironies are multi-edged ... cutting against both cultural stereotyping and women's own complicity in that process' (*Splitting Images*, 101), and in each of these novels, the protagonists must recognise the self-inflicted causes of their appropriation too in order to progress. This chapter therefore concerns victims who are imprisoned or utilised for the purposes of the oppressor, and the ways in which they recognise both this external threat and their own role in their oppression. I look at appropriation in the form of alliance, appearance and incorporation. In each of these areas, the appropriation of the victim usually means the appropriation of the body, in some form or other. However, despite the physical nature of the appropriation of nonhumans, and despite the literal instances of hunting which feature in *Surfacing* and *The Edible Woman*, instances of animal incarceration and appropriation seldom appear in literal form in these novels. Instead, these motifs are frequently used as metaphors for marriage and colonialism.

Alliance

Characters in all of these novels see alliances as undesirable, because they fear appropriation. This is due to the strong element of identity theory in Atwood's work. There is a concentration in her novels on liberating marginalised individuals; the protagonists in these three novels represent Canadians and women, and are all desirous of their own discrete autonomy both on this collective level and individually. As I explained in the introduction, this focus is typical of identity theory.

Again, animals appear frequently in the illustration of these concerns, and in *Surfacing*, as one of the groups in which the protagonist wants to share.

For Canada, while Europe represents one colonial threat, it is the United States, a greater power just over the border, which threatens it with physical appropriation. As I suggested in the previous chapter, Atwood demonstrates a great deal of sensitivity to this threat, and to varying degrees, each of these novels includes some mention of it. *Surfacing* refers to it most directly. An American, Bill Malmstrom, comes to try to buy the island from the narrator. He says that he is from 'The Wildlife Protection Association of America' (88), but the association does not actually appear to be beneficent. They want the island because their place on Lake Erie "is, ah, giving out so to say" (88), Lake Erie being infamous for its levels of pollution. While this might be coincidental, the values of Malmstrom's association do not appear to be very protective either. He says that the members need a place to "observe ... the beauties of Nature. And maybe do a little hunting and fishing" (88). Thus, their appreciation for nature extends to preying upon it, and this extends to include the Canadian environment. Already, "we have a branch in this country, quite a flourishing little branch" (88). Given the name of the association, this is something of a contradiction, but this is the threat; the United States is starting to see Canada as part of itself. David concentrates on this political implication, offering a rather drastic interpretation of Malmstrom's offer. According to David, he must be "a front man for the CIA," hoping to set up 'a snooping base' on the protagonist's island, because "this is the kind of place that will be strategically important during the war" (90). It appears that David believes America is likely to invade, in order to assimilate Canadian natural resources:

> They're running out of water, clean water, they're dirtying up all of theirs, right? Which is what we have a lot of, this country is almost all water if you look at a map... They'll try to swing a deal with the government... and the government will give in, they'll be a bunch of puppets as usual (90).

This echoes the protagonist's earlier thought as she observes a pit by the road, made by 'Americans': 'I heard they'd left, maybe that was a ruse, they could easily still be living in there, the generals in concrete bunkers and the ordinary soldiers in underground apartment buildings... There's no way of checking because we aren't allowed in' (3). Whether or not one accepts this sort of theory, Malmstrom does represent an American association that has spread to incorporate or invade Canada, bringing a threat to animals and the environment along with it.

Another potentially threatening alliance, which *Surfacing*'s protagonist sees in the same terms, is that of marriage. Canada has been colonised in the past, and is in danger of being so again, and she seems to feel that the same applies to her. When Joe says, "We should get married" (80), she feels as if 'he was threatening me with something. I swivelled, scouting for help' (80). She thinks, 'either you mind worked that way ... or it didn't; and I'd proved mine didn't. A small, neutral country' (81). This prefigures the fact that, although he is Canadian, the protagonist later thinks of Joe as an 'American.' She refuses, saying, "I've been married before and it didn't work out ... I don't want to go through that again" (81), because this is how she currently thinks of her previous relationship. In her need for independence after her earlier, colonising non-marriage, she sees the possibility of another, real one as a threat.

The threat of marriage can also be associated with the appropriation of animals. Carol Adams takes this approach. She writes, 'Women come to see themselves as being consumed by marital oppression at the domestic front' (29). In fact, in Atwood's novels, both men and women are afraid of being imprisoned, assimilated and redefined by their spouses, and depictions of marriage in these novels suggests that this is a real threat; marriage is seen as captivity in the form of a cage or as a violent trap, and spouses as cruel or indifferent keepers.

In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris describes her marriage as 'Placidity and order and everything in its place, with a decorous and sanctioned violence going on underneath everything... Sometimes – increasingly, as time went by – there were bruises, purple, then blue, then yellow' (454). Many images of animals in cages and traps are associated with Iris's marriage. In the Arcadian Court, which she visits during her engagement, Iris observes, 'A balcony ran around it halfway up, with wrought-iron railings; that was for men only, for businessmen. They could sit up there and look down on the ladies, feathered and twittering, as if in an aviary' (281). In a related image, she remarks that 'Richard used to give me... small jewelled pins in the shapes of domestic animals, of caged birds, of goldfish. Winifred's tastes, not for herself but for me' (548). Implying a contrast with Richard, Alex says to her, 'I'm not your keeper. You don't have to sit up and beg and whine and wag your tail for me' (425). Like Alex's invented 'Utopia of Aa'A,' marriage seems infinite and inescapable, and as Alex's protagonists say, "anything you can't get out of is Hell" (436).

Iris's failure to recognise that her marriage is a trap is also the internal source of her oppression. In *Splitting Images*, Hutcheon observes the way 'Margaret Atwood uses the temporal and experiential difference between her adult narrator and the same woman's earlier self' (100). In *The Blind Assassin*, this technique emphasises Iris's sense of culpability. Writing with the

benefit of hindsight, her Position Four, narrating self is now fully aware that her marriage has led to Laura's death. However, Iris's recognition of this occurs slowly. Laura demonstrates an early awareness their mutual captivity, but Iris is blind to it. '"How can we ever get out of here?" [Laura] wailed. "Before it's too late?" At least she had the sense to be frightened; she had more sense than I did' (403). Before her death, Laura has almost told Iris the truth, but still Iris does not see it. Laura returns from an abortion clinic, but she cannot make Iris understand that Richard is the father, even though she says, "You really shouldn't stay there, in that house. You shouldn't stay with *him*. He's very evil" (591). Iris only says, "He'd never give me a divorce. And I don't have any money" (591). When Laura drives off a bridge, she leaves exercise books in Iris's drawer containing an encrypted record of Richard's seduction of her (611). It is only now that Iris understands; her own marriage to Richard, her escapist affair with Alex (whom Laura also loved) and the news that he is dead have driven Laura to suicide. It is too late for Laura, but this recognition is vital to Iris's own escape; it is only then that she acts as Laura has suggested and escapes her captivity.

The idea of married captivity also applies in *Surfacing*, especially to Anna and David's marriage. The protagonist hears Anna's voice during intercourse, 'not a word but pure pain, clear as water, an animal's at the moment the trap closes' (76). This is more than violent sexuality; it forms part of the broader structure of emotional abuse that constitutes Anna and David's marriage. Anna explains:

> He's got this little set of rules. If I break one of them I get punished, except he keeps changing them so I'm never sure. He's crazy, there's something missing in him, you know what I mean? He likes to make me cry because he can't do it himself...He watches me all the time, he waits for excuses. Then either he won't screw at all or he slams it in so hard it hurts (116).

Because David's manipulation of her extends to defining Anna's appearance (as I will discuss later) the protagonist thinks of Anna as incarcerated in these terms too: 'Anna's soul, closed in the gold compact' (169).

Surfacing also contains 'real' caged animals. The protagonist remembers her brother's laboratory of animals.

> He kept them in jars and tin cans ... Sometimes he forgot to feed them or perhaps it was too cold at night, because when I went there by myself one day one of the snakes was dead and several of the frogs ... and the crayfish was floating...(125).

In this case, then, cages connect to scientific exploitation. The protagonist describes a 'Pickled cat pumped full of plastic, red for the arteries, blue for the veins' (114). She relates science to human victims too. She thinks, 'Anything we could do to the animals we could do to each other: we practised on them first' (115). In an echo of this statement, Andree Collard writes that 'what has been done to animals has always preceded what has been done to us [women]' (Collard 1988 in Birke, 45). As *Surfacing*'s protagonist implies, this was true for her. She describes her abortion as if it were vivisection: 'you might as well be a dead pig, your legs are up in a metal frame, they bend over you, technicians, mechanics, butchers' (74). Then, repeating the image of the cat, she says, 'they fill up your veins with red plastic, I saw it running down through the tube' (74). For her too then, animal captivity parallels female captivity.

Thus, although there are several sources of oppression in *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*, the protagonists' identification with captive animals most often illustrates one source in particular; gender relations come across as the most incarcerating of the various sources of oppression. However, all three forms of oppression – anthropocentrism, androcentrism, and colonialism – are linked in the perpetration of another form of appropriation: the appropriation of the victim's appearance.

Stealing beauty: appearance and trophies

Especially if the hunt is symbolic in nature, the hunter may appropriate something of the appearance of the victim, dead or alive, in a display or spectacle that contributes to the hunter's own status. As I mentioned the earlier discussion of photography, a common practice when human hunters capture other animals was (and sometimes still is) to preserve part or all of the body of an animal victim as a trophy, for the sake of social recognition. Large or ferocious-looking victims indicate the hunter's prowess. 'Big, fierce (and usually male) animals were sought' (Birke, 34). The hunter may also choose to wear part of the victim's body. This is more complicated in meaning than photography or taxidermy, because a hunter who wears a pelt not only appropriates but *takes on* something of the visual identity of the prey. The concept of the trophy has also been part of colonialism. Individual hunters, and the imperial nations that they represented, acquired prestige via the display of living and preserved examples of life from

colonised countries. The term "trophy" is also used to refer to another form of appearance appropriation, where, in relationships or marriage, one party may also, by association, benefit in social status from the appearance of the other. Thus, in species, gender and colonial relations, the appearance of Other becomes a tool. All three of these instances of appearance appropriation feature amongst *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*, often in implicit or metaphoric illustration of gender relations, but also literally.

Appearance is a strong signifier of identity, and clothing and accessories can be manipulated by the wearer to this end, but they can also be dictated by another person. The appropriation of a partner's appearance is a concept often described by the term 'accessory.' In this case, society is encouraged to associate the visual identity of one partner with the social identity of the other. This can apply to either gender, and can work simultaneously, although this will depend on the nature of the society in question. In these novels, it is chiefly women who are used this way, because historically at least, a man was often thought to own a woman, who therefore reflected his identity in her appearance. Under patriarchy,

> While [a woman] acts as an agent of display and thereby accrues social prestige through the very activity of luxury-commodity exchange, she also increases her subjective value as 'Woman' and enters into circulation as an object of exchange among the wealthy class (Emberley, 15-16).

In *The Blind Assassin*, Richard sees Iris as his possession, and as his physical façade. Iris draws her reader's attention to this point. 'He enjoyed having cigarettes lit for him, and, by extension, for me' (296). Iris says that there seems to be too much frivolity in her narrative, 'or too many things that might be taken for frivolity. A lot of clothes, the styles and colours outmoded now, shed butterflies' wings' (509). Of course, what Iris is implying is that clothing is not meaningless at all; and on inspection, it is in fact very significant as a symbol of power. This is because, as Julia Emberley says, fashion can function

> to produce a symmetrical relationship between male and female bodies and corresponding material and symbolic interests such that the female figure constitutes a spectacle of symbolic value and the male figure embodies the material values of wage earner, laborer, and money maker (141).

Moreover, in the case of Iris's marriage, the symbolic value represented by her clothing is doubly important for Richard's status because he is 'the head of a commercial empire that embraced many areas including textiles, garments and light manufacturing' (17). Richard and Winifred go to great lengths to define Iris and teach her to define herself appropriately. As soon as she becomes engaged to Richard, Winifred starts to mould her. 'Clothes could always be purchased, naturally, but I would have to learn to wear them to effect. "As if they're your skin, dear," she said' (285). Again, this represents Richard's appropriation of Iris's symbolic identity.

Even in the novels set in the present, vestiges of this notion affect gender relations. In *Surfacing*, Anna says that David "likes me to look like a young chick all the time, if I don't he gets mad" (116). When the protagonist tells Anna that she doesn't need makeup on the island, she replies, '"He doesn't like to see me without it," and then, contradicting herself, "He doesn't know I wear it"' (38). David's concern with Anna's appearance is part of his concern with his own image. The narrator notes, 'He's older than we are, he's over thirty, he's beginning to worry ... every now and then he hits himself in the stomach and says "Flab"' (64). Later, when Anna affectionately rumples his hair, he exclaims, '"Hey, don't do that ... it'll all fall out." He jumped up and went to the mirror and rearranged the hair down over his forehead' (87). In this need to appear young and enviable, he requires Anna to appear young and attractive also; because he believes that society will read his wife as a reflection of himself, he imposes his fears onto her.

In *The Edible Woman*, a similar attitude to social recognition seems to apply, though Peter is most concerned about drawing attention to Marian as his trophy. For his party, she dresses up according to his ideals, which impinge upon her comfort. 'She usually did her hair herself' (208), but 'Peter had suggested that she might have something done' (208). She feels trapped at the hairdresser's, as if in a surgery, calling the hairdresser 'the doctor' and feeling 'fascinated by the draped figure prisoned in the filigreed gold oval of the mirror and by the rack of gleaming instruments' (209). Peter has also 'hinted that perhaps she should buy a dress that was, as he put it, "not quite so mousy" as any she already owned, and she had duly bought one. It was short, red, and sequined' (208). Again, this makes her uncomfortable; the identity that it suggests does not coincide with her own sense of self. 'She thought it made her look like a callgirl' (210). Significantly, Marian sees Peter's interest in defining her as resulting from their engagement. 'Lately she had been seeing more and more of Peter, but less and less of Peter alone. Now that she had been ringed he took pride in displaying her' (176). Again, marriage represents a threat of appropriation, in this case of the woman.

However, as with other aspects of gender relations in *The Edible Woman*, gendered display is also complicated by the relationship between Ainsley and Len, because Ainsley manipulates and inverts the stereotype of male dominance. She makes use of the possibility that she might be viewed as a trophy date, turning the concept to her own ends. Not only does she strive to appear attractive to Len, she deliberately adopts a style that caters to his personal tastes. Clara has said that Len is "a seducer of young girls. He says anything over seventeen is too old" (33), so when Ainsley goes to meet him, she creates another 'version of herself' (68):

> Her makeup was understated, her eyes carefully but not noticeably shadowed to make them twice as large and round and blue, and she had sacrificed her long oval fingernails, biting them nearly to the quick so that they had a jagged schoolgirlish quality (67-68).

Thus, Ainsley disguises herself as vulnerable in order to lure him. When this succeeds, she then takes elements of Len's appearance as a visual signifier of her appropriation of him. Ainsley asks Marian to go out, and since she can't be sure which bedroom they will use, says she will hang Len's tie on the relevant door. This gives Marian 'a disturbing vision of a trophy room with stuffed and antlered heads nailed to the walls' (122), and apparently puts her in mind of cultural conflict as well. '"Why not just use his scalp?" she asked' (122). This reversal of the gendered cliché has the effect of complicating Marian's attitude to her own relationship; it contradicts her assumption that she is, almost as a matter of course, Peter's victim. What this suggests is that it is not so much male dominance as the dangers of manipulation that are to be feared in a relationship. When, in chapter four, I look at Marian's non-victimhood, I discuss other ways in which the novel raises this possibility with regard to Marian herself.

Empire

The element of trophy display also complicates *The Edible Woman*, albeit briefly, in terms of colonialism. The reference to scalping is extended when, in order to leave the pair alone, Marian goes out to see a Western, in which 'Indians' 'were numerous as buffalo and fair game for everyone' (124). The symbolic relationship to Ainsley's activities is clear. Marian returns home to find that 'A tie with green and blue stripes was dangling victoriously on the closed door of her own room' (127). The association of Len's tie, the trophy, with the Western, is very nearly an instance of triangular identification; only the gender roles have been reversed to marginalise men instead of women. There is an obvious connection between the Native American characters and

the buffalo in the film – indigenous humans are attacked by the coloniser, just as other animals are attacked by humans – and the application of these images to Ainsley's pursuit of Len brings gendered appropriation into the equation. The use of the Western is also a significant, because isolated, appearance of Native peoples. In *Survival*, Atwood refers to the use of indigenous peoples in Canadian literature for their symbolic value, either as 'victor' or victim depending on the representation of nature. She explains, 'The Indian as Victor half of a pattern in which the white man plays the Victim is of course related to the Nature-as-Monster complex' (93). When the dynamic is inverted, 'the Indian emerges in Canadian literature as the ultimate victim of social oppression and deprivation' (97). She also adds that 'We might expect some writers to have connected the animal-as-victim motif with the Indian-as-victim one, and this does in fact happen: Indians seen as animals once free, wild and beautiful, now caged, captive and sickly' (99). A similar connection is being made in *The Edible Woman* between the 'Indians' and the buffalo, but it is rare for Atwood to refer to native peoples in any of the novels treated here. Of course, the use of the native peoples as symbols by a white writer often, if not always, constitutes appropriation to the purposes of that culture. In *Survival*, Atwood writes, 'Canadian writers seem to have been less interested in Indians and Eskimoes *per se* than they have been in Indians and Eskimoes as exotic participants in their own favourite [victor-victim] game' (102). However, Atwood's novels seem to demonstrate even less interest in Native Canadians than that; they are seldom visible in her work at all. As I suggested in the introduction, the omission of Native Canadians in postcolonial discourse discounts or denies their claims as the colonised. Given her interest in Canada as a colonised victim, and her own acknowledgement of Native Canadians as an obvious instance of this, their absence from Atwood's fiction is somewhat striking, and as I will suggest, it serves a specific purpose.

Even where there are obvious connections between Iris's experiences, colonialism and display, *The Blind Assassin* contains no reference to this more colonised group. In this novel, women are explicitly associated with the display of colonies and colonised animals, but not with colonised peoples; all of Canada is generalised into one colony. This triangular link is made through Richard, who is a neocoloniser; literally as well as metaphorically, he represents foreign imperialist policy. He is a member of 'the Royal Canadian Yacht Club' and an influential member of 'the Empire Club' (17). He also subscribes to and promotes the influence of other, more powerful nations, in the years before World War II. 'Mr. Griffen strongly urged that Canada follow the lead of Britain, France and the United States... The policy of non-intervention should be adopted immediately, as Canadian citizens should not be asked to risk their lives in this

foreign fray' (437). The paradox is, of course, that to follow *is* to align with foreign countries by copying their policy, and Canadian lives were lost in the foreign fray of World War II when Canada followed Britain into battle. Richard's role and attitude demonstrate the way he acts as an agent of neo-colonisation, fostering the influences of the nations that most threaten Canada.

According to Iris, these attitudes are not limited to the political arena. Richard 'preferred conquest to cooperation, in every area of life' (454); that is, also in his private life. During their honeymoon, Iris 'was taken out to see what in his view ought to be seen' (368), and what she sees are symbols of appropriation. There is 'Prince Albert on his throne with a quartet of exotic women roiling and wallowing around his feet... These were supposed to be the Continents, over which Prince Albert, though dead, still held sway' (368). This image symbolises not only the European possession of attractive colonies like Canada, but also Richard's possession of her. She also sees stuffed animals on display at Natural History Museum. As Lynda Birke explains, hunting trophies were

> ...displayed as part of tableaux to demonstrate British colonial power... The animals, and their deaths, thus served as metaphors of social meaning... The trophies had to be displayed in suitable fashion, not only to 'impress the natives' before leaving but also to reinforce notions of imperial might at home (Birke, 34).

Iris's experience of this in the museum is an illustration of her colonised, trophy-wife status, a point which is not lost on her, at least in retrospect. 'I wonder, now, why it was that the sight of so many large stuffed animals would be conducive to my education? ...Why should the stuffed animals have been better for me, or better for his idea of what I should become...? ...I think I know' (368-69).

What is missing from *The Blind Assassin*'s examples of colonial display is any reference to indigenous peoples. As Bob Mullan and Gary Marvin demonstrate, colonised humans as well as other animals were often exhibited as part of imperial spectacle.

> In order to consolidate consciousness of them, nations like England, France and Germany displayed their colonies to their home populations, to their rivals and to the world at large... The exhibition of exotic peoples and exotic animals both in the zoo world and in colonial exhibitions had a commercial purpose but it also enhanced the exhibiting nation's prestige (87-88).

Atwood's neglect of such apparently significant parallels might not be an accident, however; via this omission, she is able to give her protagonists uncontested access to the position of the colonised. Iris's status is not complicated by prior claimants; instead, her connection to Canada bypasses Native Canadians as she identifies with nature itself, through other animals.

Fur

The relationship between the human appropriation of animal appearance and the male appropriation of female appearance is perhaps best illustrated in the case of fur, where both occur simultaneously. Fur appears most often in *The Blind Assassin.* In this novel, animals occur in their least figurative capacity as fur, though for the most part their meaning is still human-determined. Emberley suggests that 'The fur coat appears to have a life of its own, but ... it comes into view only as a support for the narrative or to fill out a character' (141). In particular, as a luxury commodity, 'fur circulates as a *material signifier...*' (Emberley, 4), and in a patriarchal society, a married woman wearing fur signifies her husband's material wealth. Thus, like Iris in her role as Mrs. Griffen, fur carries the meanings imposed onto it as part of the status objectives of the dominant entity. While Iris is the one wearing the fur, she is also 'worn' by Richard as a kind of second body for the display of his wealth. This does accord her a certain power, provided she uses it in ways that fit this display purpose. When she goes to meet with Laura's headmistress, 'I dressed in a manner I hoped would intimidate her, or at least remind her of Richard's standing and influence: I believe I wore a cashmere coat trimmed with wolverine – warm for the season, but impressive' (458). The headmistress is duly frightened of 'what I represented: a big wad of money' (458). Thus, to some extent, Iris benefits from wearing the Other, and at this point she does not seem to recognise that she and the wolverine are both being exploited. However, ecofeminists Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci 'remark that women who wear fur unwittingly adopt the "identity of prey" and so participate in their own degradation' (Dunayer, 16). This applies to Iris in that, by accepting and making use of Richard's social power, as represented by the fur coat, she accepts the human domination of the animals involved, and her husband's objectification of her.

For as always, what Iris and her coat really represent is Richard's money and power. Iris says, 'money was imputed to me, the same way crimes are imputed to those who've simply been present at them' (175). For Alex, she is an implicated witness to the exploitation of the fur trade. 'The clothes on your back come off somebody else's, he'd said to her once' (418). This

expression refers to sweatshops, but of course, it is also literally true of the pelts themselves. Iris is aware, though, that 'Someone's fingers, right around here, must have sewn the ermine trim on her white chiffon evening cape' (418). She says to Alex, "What do you want me to *do*? What do you want *me* to do? Do you seriously think I have any power?" (418). Emberley notes that anti-fur campaigns depict 'bourgeois, and middle-class, female consumers as morally responsible for the exploitation and oppression of other humans and animals, even if, politically and economically, they are largely denied access to such realms of power' (8). Alex is holding Iris responsible in this way, but her situation is the opposite of what he implies; she is exploited by the fur trade too, at the other end of the process as a vehicle of display.

This may be one of the factors in her identification with fur itself. Emberley says that 'social differences encode the value of fur for the consumer, the reader, or the spectator' (5-6), and fur has meanings for Iris that are denied in the language of wealth. She associates it with skin and the comfort of contact. As a bereaved child, 'Laura used to spend a lot of time inside Mother's fur coat. It was made of sealskin, and still had Mother's handkerchief in the pocket' (167). As an old woman, Iris describes a friend's leather gloves as being 'like giant, extra paws' (580). In a thought directly inspired by the gloves, she muses that perhaps she should get a pet: 'Something warm and uncritical and furry – a fellow creature ... We need the mammalian huddle' (581). Iris even has a dream in which she grows fur herself:

> [M]y legs were covered with hair ... like the pelt of an animal. The winter was coming, I dreamed, and so I would hibernate. First I would grow fur, then crawl into a cave, then go to sleep. It all seemed normal, as if I'd done it before (271).

These reflections on fur suggest that Iris feels a certain affinity with fur itself, if not with fur-bearing animals.

It is also likely that the fur which Iris wears is of Canadian origin. The fur trade played a key role in Canada in colonialism and later in national wealth. During Canada's time as a colony, the fur trade was a major source of colonial interest and therefore of exploitation of native peoples and of animals simultaneously. In *Surfacing*, David epitomises this as he asks, "Do you realize ... that this country is founded on the bodies of dead animals? Dead fish, dead seals, and historically dead beavers, the beaver is to this country what the black man is to the United States" (33-34). Indeed, financially, 'the fur trade is one of the many beauties of the French and British colonial legacies' (Chantal Nadeau, 10), in that it since colonisation it has also contributed

greatly to Canada's own wealth. However, fur can also be considered exploitative both in its role 'in terms of a sexual economy' (Nadeau, 22) (as it relates to women's role in the display of status), and of course, in its instrumentalism and commodification of animals. Therefore, the fur that features in Richard's colonisation of Iris might also be an example of the literal colonisation of Canadian animals. This could be another way in which the three aspects of triangular identification are articulated together. Because of her ambiguous power relationship with fur, however, Iris can be seen both to profit and to suffer from the fur trade, just as Canada can. Neither the character nor her country has an unproblematic position; they do not fit easily into Plumwood's framework of centrism, but instead, even as they are appropriated, they blur the boundaries between centre and margin, drawing the applicability of the structure into question.

Incorporation

The third form of appropriation, and the most common outcome of a hunt involving animal predators, is incorporation. In *Surfacing*, *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, images of incorporation apply especially to gender relations. Among humans and other animals, the hunt can often result in the hunter consuming its prey, and this is an idea that applies both literally, in terms of animals, and metaphorically, in terms of gender relations.

Appropriation in relationships is commonly illustrated using metaphors of physical incorporation. Of course, this physical incorporation can be a passive process on both sides. Marian, who is always wary of any threat to autonomy, is at one point afraid of accidental assimilation into mass female identity. '[S]he was one of them, her body the same, identical, merged with that other flesh that choked the air in the flowered room with its sweet organic scent; she felt suffocated by this thick sargasso-sea of femininity' (167). She wishes Peter were there so that she could hold onto him, to 'keep from being sucked down' (167). At this point, Marian is more worried about incorporation by her own gender than about appropriation by men (or about assimilation into mass humanity). However, in Atwood's novels, the image of incorporation is most frequently applied in gender relations.

The instrumental use of the victim's body is an idea that has obvious relevance to gendered hunting, especially since eating is sometimes considered to be a gendered activity or to reflect gender power relations. Maggie Kilgour observes:

> Women are traditionally associated with food; as Caroline Walker Bynum has noted, one obvious reason for this is that that is how we, both men and women, first encounter them,

> a fact that also makes it easy to identify women with production and men with consumption (241).

According to Adams, men are also more likely to be associated with meat eating than women are. She asserts that 'People with power have always eaten meat,' and that 'The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinctions with an added twist: a mythology permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity' (26). This idea holds in Atwood too. In *The Blind Assassin*, Alex creates the Planet of Aa'A, where the Peach women are vegetarian and 'there were no carnivorous animals' (434). This contrasts with the tastes of the male protagonists, who, while stranded on Aa'A, begin to crave meat. 'After some time this existence, wonderful though it was, began to pall on Will and Boyd' (435). 'You know what I'd like right now? said Will ...A great big grilled steak, rare, dripping with blood ... ' (435).

Perhaps in part due to this gendered view of food, many theorists discuss a perceived connection between sexual intercourse and physical incorporation. Marti Kheel observes that, 'As is the case with hunting itself, eating animals is often described in language that contains sexual undertones...' (103). Kilgour notes that 'Like other perceived oppositions, that between man and women can slide into the basic and rigid terms of eater and eaten, which make reciprocity or communion impossible' (245). Images of gendered eating most often refer to the male incorporation of the female, and thus invert the sexual act in order to conform to power relations. Adams applies the parallel between physical incorporation of animals and sexual intercourse to women victims, in her feminist vegetarian work. She proposes that, in women's writing,

> Four themes arise when a vegetarian 'interruption' occurs. These themes include rejection of male acts of violence, identification with animals, repudiation of men's control of women, and feminism as opposed to a fallen world composed in part of women's oppression, war, and meat eating (121).

The relationship between meat and women is a concept that Atwood treats both playfully and seriously. In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris observes that the word *trousseau* 'sounded like *trussed* – what was done to raw turkeys with skewers and pieces of string' (291). This is an anticipation of what her marriage will hold, in terms of limitations and in terms of penetrative violence. Alex's science fiction also includes a scene of overt sexual assimilation: 'the space being's face is close

to hers, his cold tentacles hold her in an implacable grip; he is gazing at her with unprecedented longing and desire' (338). 'The green mouth opens, revealing fangs. They approach her neck. He loves her so much he'll assimilate her – make her part of himself, forever. He and she will become one' (338).

In *The Edible Woman*, as the title suggests, Marian sees herself exactly this way, at risk of consumption by Peter. Adams therefore discusses this book in her work. She says that female characters' repudiation of men's control is 'related to their identification with animals' and 'expresses their sense of shared violation. Linking sexual oppression to meat eating, Atwood's and Piercy's women ... give up meat as well' (Adams, 129). However, sexuality in itself does not oppress Marian. She does not seem to associate sex with being consumed. Even when Peter bites her shoulder as they lie in the bath, she doesn't panic at all; she responds playfully and subversively. 'I recognized this as a signal for irresponsible gaiety, and I bit his shoulder in return, then, making sure the shower lever was still up, I reached out my right foot ... and turned on the COLD tap' (63). It is marriage, the consolidation of the relationship, which disturbs Marian, because of her more general fear of identity-assimilation, as seen above. As Kilgour notes, 'In French, to consume and to consummate are the same word' (7), *consommer*, and it appears that for Marian also, the meanings overlap. This is symbolised as early as the proposal, before Marian is even aware of her feelings on the subject. When Peter asks how she thinks they would be married, a flash of lightening shows her 'myself, small and oval, mirrored in his eyes' (83), thus, herself as a small part of him.

Marian does not recognise that she fears this until, after their engagement, she watches Peter eating steak. She is struck by his removed violence and by a sense of empathy with the object of it. '[V]iolence in connection with Peter seemed incongruous to her' (150), but she then remembers hearing of a 'young boy who had gone berserk with a rifle and killed nine people ... He wasn't the kind who would hit anyone with his fist or even use a knife. When he chose violence it was a removed violence, a manipulation of specialized instruments' (151). Marian develops a belief in Peter's capacity for removed, hunter-like violence, a removal of which she herself is suddenly incapable. 'She looked down at her own half-eaten steak and suddenly saw it as a hunk of muscle. Blood red. Part of a real cow that once moved and ate and was killed, knocked on the head as it stood in a queue' (151). Thus, as she identifies with another animal, she makes a connection: Peter is suddenly a violent consumer of life, and as his fiancée, she is at risk. As Adams says, 'the idea of meat is used as a trope for women's oppression; this trope identifies the overlap of the oppression of women and animals' (121).

Thus, in Atwood's novels, the victims of gender relations are often associated with the nonhuman victims of literal incorporation. For the protagonists at least, the threat of incorporation contributes to or resonates with their various degrees of identification with other animals. However, this idea is taken still further. In Marian's case, because of this fear of consumption, and in the case of *Surfacing*'s protagonist, because of her conscious affinity with other animals, there comes to be a certain limit on their own eating habits as well.

Food taboos

The protagonists of *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing* both discover that they can only consume if they do so in accordance with particular rules. Neither of them knows the rules in advance; they learn only by trial and error, but it would appear that the nature of these rules stems in part from internal as well as external causes of victimhood. They must acknowledge these inner conflicts as well as recognising their oppressors if they are to progress through Position Three.

In *Surfacing*, the rules governing the protagonist's actions have religious overtones. For the protagonist, the heron represents nature as crucified by humanity, an idea derived from the crucifix shapes that herons assume when their wings are open.

> The shape of the heron flying above us the first evening we fished, legs and neck stretched, wings outspread, a bluegrey cross, and the other heron or was it the same one, hanging wrecked from the tree. Whether it died willingly, consented, whether Christ died willingly, anything that suffers and dies instead of us is Christ; if they didn't kill birds and fish they would have killed us (134).

The protagonist briefly constructs meat consumption in terms of communion. She says, 'The animals die that we may live, they are substitute people, hunters in the fall killing the deer, that is Christ also. And we eat them ... we are eaters of death, dead Christ-flesh resurrecting inside us, granting us life' (134). Later, when she is left alone on the island, the narrator experiences a different sort of communion, with natural gods. During this period, eating is just one of the actions that they regulate; the artificial, human world is out of bounds to the narrator. In terms of food, 'tin cans and jars are forbidden; they are glass and metal. I head for the garden and prowl through it,' (172). From the garden, she eats 'the green peas out of their shells and the raw yellow beans' (172). She finds carrots, a strawberry and beets (172). The next day, however, she believes that the vegetable garden is forbidden too. She thinks:

> ...there must be something else I can eat, something that is not forbidden. I think of what I might catch, crayfish, leeches, no not yet. Along the trail the edible plants, the mushrooms, I know the poisonous kinds and the ones we used to collect, some of them can be eaten raw (174).

Though she does not eat meat during this natural communion, her perception of the food taboos does not rule this out. 'I will need other things, perhaps I can catch a bird or a fish, with my hands, that will be fair' (174-175).

The narrator's attitude to natural justice towards animals might also be related to her feelings of guilt regarding her fœtus. The internal cause of her oppression is her initial failure to accept responsibility for her abortion. Although she genuinely feels affinity with animals (it is emphasised throughout the novel and is not simply a transferal of her other concerns), her increasing sense of guilt towards them can also be read as disguised manifestations of guilt over her abortion. Initially, she aids her human companions, taking them fishing and killing the fish for them. However, she feels a growing sense of culpability. After finding the heron's killers to be Canadian, 'I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my hands, as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it' (124). She says, 'The trouble some people have being German, I thought, I have being human' (124). Later she refuses to condone the killing:

> Thud of metal on fishbone, skull, neckless headbody, the fish is whole, I couldn't anymore, I had no right to. We didn't need it... We were committing this act, violation, for sport or amusement or pleasure... While they admired David's murder, cadaver, I took the bottle with the frogs in it out of the tackle box and unscrewed the top; they slipped into the water, green with black leopard spots and gold eyes, rescued (114).

She has made a transition from passive acceptance of hunting to rejecting it entirely, which parallels her transition to resisting the intervention of her abortion. Gradually, she acknowledges that she failed resist and save her fœtus, which she thinks of in nonhuman terms: 'it was hiding in me as if in a burrow and instead of granting it sanctuary I let them catch it' (139). She believes that 'an unborn baby has its eyes open and can look out through the walls of the mother's stomach, like a frog in a jar' (26), and the novel's many images of animals, especially frogs,

being released from jars or killed may be associated in the narrator's mind with her fœtus. This internal dilemma thus offers a further explanation for her attitude to other species.

Marian, in *The Edible Woman*, also identifies with the consumed. However, this is apparently accidental rather than conscious and deliberate, and she takes a while to realise that this is the cause of her restricted diet. Because meat is the first food to be forbidden her, the imposed attitudes to food initially manifest as vegetarianism. '"I'm turning into a vegetarian," she was thinking sadly, "one of those cranks..."' (153). In her discussion of *The Edible Woman*, Adams says, 'Marian's unconscious attitude toward food changes: her body rejects certain foods and she realizes to her surprise that she is becoming a vegetarian, that her body has taken an ethical stand' (131). However, Adams does not follow all that happens to Marian's diet. She fails entirely to address the fact that it extends well beyond vegetarianism; Marian's body increases the limits of the 'food circle' (257) until she cannot consume *anything at all*. Marian is understandably upset; her body seems to be undermining her very existence. '"God," she thought to herself, "I hope it's not permanent; I'll starve to death!"' (152). She cannot understand the cause of this. It appears that although she is aware of other threats to her autonomy, like mass female identity, she takes a long time to become aware that marriage constitutes a threat. Her body's rebellion is her first real clue that anything is wrong.

An explanation can be found in Atwood's commentary on her own novels. She says of *Surfacing*'s protagonist: 'if you define yourself as innocent ... you refuse to accept power. You refuse to admit that you have it, then you refuse to exercise it, because the exercise of power is defined as evil' (Atwood in McKay, 220). The nature of this 'evil' power in *The Edible Woman* is defined in Atwood's introduction to the novel, where she says that she wanted to write about symbolic cannibalism. If a cannibal is a human or other animal species that eats the flesh of its own kind, then cannibalism can mean eating those considered the same as oneself, regardless of species. If she is avoiding cannibalism, this would mean that Marian cannot eat anything that comes under her definition of her own kind, and that 'her own kind' extends well beyond human flesh to include all food. On more than one occasion women are explicitly likened to foods other than meat. Clara, pregnant, looks 'like a strange vegetable growth, a bulbous tuber' (32), while the women in Marian's office are described like fruit. 'They were ripe, some rapidly becoming overripe, some already beginning to shrivel; she thought of them as attached by stems at the tops of their heads to an invisible vine, hanging there in various stages of growth and decay' (166-167). With such associations in mind, it is perhaps no surprise that Marian's diet comes to exclude 'anything that had once been, or ... might still be living' (178).

> She became aware of the carrot ... they come along and dig it up, maybe it even makes a sound, a scream too low for us to hear, but it doesn't die right away, it keeps on living, right now it's still alive... She thought she felt it twist in her hands. She dropped it on the table. "Oh no," she said, almost crying. "Not this too!" (178).

Eventually, Marian gets to the point that she cannot consume at all, '"Not even a glass of orange juice." It had finally happened at last then. Her body had cut itself off. The food circle had dwindled to a point, a black dot, closing off the outside' (257).

What Marian seems to be struggling with here is that, as Jacques Derrida explains, consumption is inevitable on both physical and symbolic levels. He says, 'The so called nonanthropophagic cultures practice symbolic anthropophagy and even construct their most elevated socious, indeed the sublimity of their morality, their politics, and their right, on this anthropophagy' (114). The problem for Marian is that she stops being able to accept this. Derrida says, 'The question is no longer one of knowing if it is 'good' to eat the other or if the other is 'good' to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him' (114). This is what Marian cannot cope with. As Hobgood puts it, 'she not only loses the ability to eat anything with a semblance of vitality but is also haunted by the idea that she herself is being consumed' (n.pag). Because her understanding of her own kind crosses species boundaries in its inclusion of the oppressed or consumed, she cannot let herself eat or be eaten, symbolically or literally. In Derrida's terms, she is stuck on the question of whether it is good to eat any other at all. For Derrida,

> The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good ... *how* for goodness sake should one *eat well*? (115).

However, Marian is not able to ask herself this question until she rejects her own victimhood; until she does, she cannot conquer her aversion to eating because she cannot help seeing it as cannibalism. For these reasons, a refusal of power and a phobia of (symbolic) cannibalism, on her own part and by Peter, seem much better explanations for Marian's behaviour than simple vegetarianism.

However, the possibility that this might be less fact than phobia raises the question of the internal causes of Marian's victimisation. The extent to which she is responsible for her own victimhood is unclear. Duncan tries to tell her that "it's all in your mind" (263), which she accepts, but she still believes that this is a reaction to external oppression by Peter. Duncan does not necessarily agree. He holds up other theories of victimisation that Marian hasn't considered. 'It was me. I was trying to destroy you... Maybe Peter was trying to destroy me, or maybe I was trying to destroy him, or we were both trying to destroy each other, how's that?' (281). Duncan therefore suggests that Marian has invented, to some extent at least, her own victimhood. This would mean that Marian's oppression is largely due to internal causes, and that by failing to recognise this, she has been very unfair to those around her. However, Duncan goes on to undermine the issue still further, saying that the very question is irrelevant. "What does it matter, you're back to so-called reality, you're a consumer" (281). If Marian reacted to this more fully, she might recognise her error, but since Duncan has said that it doesn't matter, she can simply change the subject, and the novel ends. Marian's own role in her victimisation is never resolved. This means that it is hard to tell whether, as she believes, she has progressed towards non-victimhood, or whether she in fact returns to Position One, in a kind of inventive denial, or at best, remains in Position Two, aware that she is a victim without recognising the true causes of her oppression. In the next chapter, I discuss this potential failure of the Victim Positions in more depth.

Thus, all three angles of the protagonists' marginalised identities come under threat of appropriation in these novels, and risk instrumental and often physical assimilation by another, more dominant entity. This can occur through alliance with that entity, which may compromise the autonomy of the smaller party. In particular, alliance is shown to threaten female autonomy. The dangers of marital imprisonment, violence and assimilation are emphasised via the extensive associated images of incarcerated animals. Appropriation may also include the exploitation of the other sex, a colony or another animal as a means of display, accruing prestige to the dominant human or the empire. A third, physical manifestation of appropriation may occur in assimilation. For the animal, this entails literal consumption, for the female, sexual consumption, and for the colony, incorporation through literal invasion, administrative regulation and the appropriation of natural resources.

In these ways, the instances of appropriation that appear in *Surfacing*, *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, female, animal and colonial identity again function together, in overlapping or interrelated images of victim experience. Because of the prevalence of metaphors

of appropriation, the narrators must be aware of the parallels between themselves and other victim animals. Although this affinity with animals does not always seem to last (as I explain in the following chapters), the awareness of parallels in terms of hunting and appropriation seems to be a positive way of reaching Position Two, the acknowledgement of victimhood. Situations like hunting and especially appropriation also leave the identity of the perpetrators in very little doubt, which moves the protagonists toward Position Three, in which they should recognise and acknowledge both the internal and external causes of their victimhood. In each of the novels treated here, some combination of these factors is what spurs the protagonist on to *Survival*'s Position Four state of creative non-victimhood, as she effects change in her situation.

SECTION TWO

4. Creative agency and subjectivity

'above all, to refuse to be a victim'

- Surfacing

In the first section of this thesis, I explored the ways in which Atwood uses animals in *Surfacing*, *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin* as part of her portrayal of victimhood. The recognition of parallels between themselves and the animal victims of hunting and appropriation heightens the protagonists' sense of their own gendered and colonised victimisation. In this second section, my focus shifts. I continue to follow the protagonists as they move through the Victim Positions. As they develop agency, they start to define themselves on their own terms, and in this section, I am also concerned with the consequences of this. I explore the nature of subjectivity as the protagonists embrace it, comparing and contrasting this with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in particular. As a part of the protagonists' self-definition, there are alterations in their relationship to other victims, and in this section, as well as looking at how Atwood uses animals, I move beyond this to expose some of the implications of this use.

Having established what it means to be a victim in these novels, I address in this chapter what it means to be a non-victim. Atwood writes that having gone through the phases of acknowledging victimhood in Position Two, and recognising the causes of oppression in Position Three, the victim can enter a position of creative non-victimhood. She defines Position Four as 'not for victims but for those who have never been victims at all, or for ex-victims: those who have been able to move into it from Position Three because the external and/or the internal causes of victimisation have been removed' (1972, 38). In this position, Atwood writes, 'creative activity of all kinds becomes possible. Energy is no longer being suppressed' or being used up to move through the Victim Positions (38). As victims, Atwood's own protagonists have indeed been frustrated in their creativity, impeded by their oppression, but by various means they each attain Position Four, and their achievement of this is demonstrated by symbolic acts of creativity. I look at the protagonists' use of techniques of subversion of and escape from oppression, and the symbolic proofs of their newfound agency. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of 'becoming' provides a useful means of evaluating the changing nature of identity and identification in Position Four, because it suggests ways to occupy space outside power relations, and as non-victims, Atwood's protagonists do carry out creative acts of resistance which resemble becoming. Later, however, these possible instances of becoming are undermined. I argue that there are certain

side-effects to the acquisition of power in these novels. One concern that I want to raise is what happens to the victims' identification with marginalised Others, like victimised women or other species, when they are no longer being victimised themselves. An associated difficulty with the Victim Positions is the possible victimisation of others on the part of ex-victims, caused by the failure to find or remain in a space outside power relations. As the protagonists of *Surfacing*, *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin* often fail to sustain triangular identification, in terms of other victims and in terms of collectivity, it appears that there may be various ideological costs to the attainment of power in these novels, which may undermine the success of *Survival*'s Victim Positions as a means of overcoming victimhood.

Subverting the external oppressor

One of the earliest forms of resistance to become available to the protagonists is subversion. As a tool for resisting victimhood, subversion offers a useful transition from victimhood to overt rebellion because of its subtle, 'two-faced' nature, which allows the victim or 'ex-victim' to undermine dominant values while apparently inhabiting them. As Lorna Irvine puts it, 'On one level, the story may seem passively situated within dominant patterns ... The other levels are the subversive levels, and include irony, and social and political critiques' (12). Temporarily at least, Atwood's protagonists do just this.

In *Surfacing*, the protagonist's self-conscious animality leads her to subvert colonial, gender and species marginalisation in her reactions to humanity. David is made to stand for all three forms of oppression, including the United States, because, as there are so few representatives of this, she can subvert this third oppressive influence only through her attribution of 'American' status to others. As I have observed with regard to the heron's killers (who, though Canadian, are 'still Americans' [123] because of what they have done), *Surfacing*'s protagonist starts to conflate destructive humanity with white United States influence. When David offers his theory of a war between the United States and Canada, the protagonist responds as if he *is* one of the potential colonisers that he is describing. '"Where will you get food?" I said. "What do you mean 'you'?" he said. "I'm just speculating"' (91). The narrator's definition of what constitutes American is starting to warp. Already, what she means by it is actually limited to white Americans in the United States. Later, it is clear that she sees humans in general as becoming more 'American,' or even turning into a kind of cyborg species. David, already embodying misogyny and unnecessary human hunting, provides an instance of this too.

> His wristwatch glittered, glass and silver: perhaps it was his dial, the key that wound him, the switch... Second-hand American was spreading over him in patches, like mange or lichen. He was infested, garbled, and I couldn't help him: it would take such time to heal, unearth him, scrape down to where he was true (146).

Instead, she subverts David's attempt to make the trophy-like collection, *Random Samples*, which she sees as a threat to the things that matter to her.

> I unzip the bag with the camera equipment and lift out the canisters of film... I unwind the film, standing full in the sun, and let it spiral into the lake... When I've unravelled the reels I open the back of the camera. The film coils onto the sand under the water, weighted down by its containers; the invisible captured images are swimming away into the lake like tadpoles, Joe and David beside their defeated log... Anna with no clothes on jumping off the end of the dock, finger up, hundreds of tiny naked Annas no longer bottled and shelved (160).

As I discussed in chapter two, David's collection of his *Random Samples* has objectified and appropriated other trophies and animals, and Anna's naked, humiliated body. By destroying the film, the protagonist therefore enacts a symbolic subversion of some of the anthropocentric and androcentric sources of her own oppression, and because she is subverting the power of someone whom she now equates with 'Americans,' she may feel that her action subverts that power too.

In *The Edible Woman*, Marian experiences symptoms of gender and species oppression, including her extreme camera-shyness, her disturbance at Peter's hunting story, and her reactions to food, all of which make her aware that something must be oppressing her. She develops a complex self-analysis in which she concentrates on her dietary symptoms.[1] However, Marian is not very subversive. On the surface, she clearly wants very much to conform; indeed, she is sometimes more worried about this than about starving (203). She goes, separately, to Ainsley, Clara, and, even though 'she was afraid he might think she was some kind of freak' (203), to Peter, with the question, "do you think I'm normal?" (204, 206, 207). Ainsley simply tells her that there is no such thing, and Clara says "I'd say you're almost abnormally normal..." (206). Peter seems to think she means sexually normal. He

[1] Hobgood insists on calling this anorexia nervosa, even though she recognises that 'Marian doesn't starve herself to become thin--and isn't "starving herself" at all in the ways our culture has come to think of anorexia in recent years as a conformation to media images of thinness' (n.pag.). Indeed, she does not even lose weight because, while she can, she eats a lot of noodles (221). I therefore choose to avoid the term 'anorexia.'

laughs, '"I'd say from my limited experience that you're marvellously normal, darling." She sighed; she didn't mean it that way' (207). It is important to Peter it that she is normal, though, or as he says, sensible. He says, "You may not have known this but I've always thought that's the first thing to look for when it comes to choosing a wife" (89). Marian does not seem to recognise that limitations of normality might make it an undesirable state, which appears to be Atwood's own attitude. In Atwood's discussion of the socialisation of her generation of women, she writes, 'We were told that there were certain "right," "normal" ways to be women, and other ways that were wrong. The right ways were limited in number. The wrong ways were endless' (1990, 15). She shows that this was alienating. 'We spent a lot of time wondering if we were "normal." Some of us decided we weren't' (16). The fact that Marian isn't therefore contributes to her liberation. Ultimately, her abnormality or madness liberates her from Peter's influence. Thus, almost despite herself, Marian is also subversive. Her unrecognised feelings about marriage manifest in her negative reaction to food, and lead her, apparently against her will, to escape from normal situations involving Peter, and, as I later show, to another, far less 'normal' man.

In *The Blind Assassin*, the central theme is, as I said in the previous chapter, Iris's blindness with regard to her own and Laura's oppression. Until she finds the truth in Laura's exercise books, her awareness of her oppression is only vague. Laura's sense of it is keener, and she is more subversive than Iris. When she is supposed to come to live with Iris and Richard, Laura runs away, which, according to Winifred 'would reflect badly on the family. People might think she'd been mistreated, and this could become a serious impediment. To Richard and his future political prospects, was what she meant' (397). When Richard and Iris recover her, she explains to Iris, "Richard killed Father ... I can't live in his house. It's wrong" (402). She also causes trouble with Winifred, who complains, "Yesterday [Laura] told me that marriage wasn't important, only love" (516). Laura explains to Iris, "I only said that marriage was an outworn institution... Love is giving, marriage is buying and selling. You can't put love into a contract" (518). Thus, Laura's subversion of Richard's power, and of social institutions generally, is recognised by Richard and Winifred, and unsettles them. Iris, on the other hand, subverts Richard's power chiefly through her secret, adulterous relationship with Alex.

Escape

Other men

In all three novels, oppression is in some capacity represented by a relationship with a patriarchal character who is colonising or anthropocentric as well as being male. In

Surfacing, this is the relationship with the unnamed art teacher, who instigates the abortion of the fœtus and who is imagined, for a time, as an ex-husband. In *The Blind Assassin,* this role is obviously filled by the neo-colonising Richard, and in *The Edible Woman*, by Peter the hunter. The role of animals here has been to underline that these men are a cause of oppression, and it becomes clear that the protagonists have identified them as such when they begin new relationships. On the most obvious level, a new relationship is a subversive escape from another one. Already, then, 'the other man' can act as a stepping stone in the protagonists' development of full independence. It is important to emphasise, though, that these are not rescue figures. Rather, they are a form of temporary, artificial escape. However, the characterisation of each of the other men makes him an appropriate choice for the protagonist in question. He is not just the 'other man'; he is the opposite of the patriarchal male character in that he is Other, sharing certain marginal characteristics with the protagonist herself.

Alex, in *The Blind Assassin*, is a significant example of this in that in his marginalisation, Alex is actively, creatively a non-victim. What is important for Iris in his personality is that he is a figure of resistance. Even before Iris's extramarital relationship with him, Alex has been in conflict with Richard politically, and lives in hiding as a result. His exact role is never defined, but he is believed to be a Bolshevik and an agitator among factory workers, opposing the power of men like Richard and the girls' father. He becomes a scapegoat. 'He was an arsonist and a murderer, it was said... He had come to Port Ticonderoga to infiltrate the working force, and to sow seeds of dissension' (262-63). In his relationship with Iris, Alex is, in terms of his own 'Zycron' story, the blind assassin to her sacrificial virgin. In his story, a virgin victim is to be deflowered by the Lord of the Underworld and sacrificed by the king. There is a plot for a blind assassin to replace the victim when the Lord of the Underworld has left, and to kill the king. However, he arrives early, deflowers her himself, and chooses to rescue her. In 'life,' Alex provides Iris with a sexual escape from her sacrificial role, and with an important imaginative refuge from her marriage and from Richard's values. 'She goes to him for amnesia, for oblivion... Immolation is what she wants, however briefly. To exist without boundaries' (319).

In *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing*, the narrators' own preoccupations mean that the most important marginalised characteristics of their other men have to do with animality (although in *The Edible Woman*, Marian seems almost oblivious to this connection). In *Surfacing*, the narrator's attitude to Joe is ambiguous, as the protagonist seems unable to love him (as discussed above) and at one point rejects him on the grounds of his humanity. '[T]he cloth separated from him and I saw he was human, I didn't want him in me, sacrilege, he was

one of the killers' (141). However, various factors might redeem him according to her values. He is also physically close to the animal world, including the animal world as appropriated by humans. 'From the side he's like the buffalo on the U.S. nickel, shaggy and blunt-snouted, with small clenched eyes' (2).[2] She says he has

> ...the defiant but insane look of a species once dominant, now threatened with extinction. That's how he thinks of himself too: deposed, unjustly. Secretly he would like them to set up a kind of park for him, like a bird sanctuary. Beautiful Joe (2).

At the end of the novel, the protagonist withdraws her previous judgement of Joe: 'he isn't an American, I can see that now; he isn't anything, he is only half-formed, and for that reason I can trust him' (186). In other words, because Joe is undefined, he does not represent patriarchy, meaning that he does not marginalise her.

In *The Edible Woman*, Duncan fulfils a similar role for Marian. Like Joe, he is also seen in terms of animals, which either contributes to or illustrates his acceptability. His animality contrasts with the anthropocentrism of Peter, and places him on the margins with Marian. He says of himself,

> I'm stuck on that wretched term paper. Once I went to the zoo and there was a cage with a frenzied armadillo in it going around in figure-eights, just around and around in the same path... They say all caged animals get that way when they're caged, it's a form of psychosis, and even if you set the animals free after they go like that they'll just run around in the same pattern (95).

Marian also sees Duncan in non-human terms. She refers to 'his head drawn down into the neck of his dark sweater like a turtle's into its shell' (94), and strokes his 'shaggy sweater' ... 'as though it was a furry skin. Beneath it she could feel his spare body, the gaunt shape of a starved animal in time of famine' (171). Thus, Duncan is being seen chiefly in terms of suffering nonhuman animals; like Marian's, his is not the animality of the predator but of the prey. At another point, Duncan selects a species for himself that removes him as far as possible from humanity. '"At last I know what I really want to be," Duncan said... "An

---

[2] Of course, her reference to the nickel puts the responsibility for this onto the United States again, just as she assumes that the heron's killers are "American", and later, equates being (white, United States) American with human destructiveness in general.

amoeba" (200). Marian asks him why. "'Oh, they're immortal," he said, "and sort of shapeless and flexible. Being a person is getting too complicated"' (201). He has an extreme desire for passivity. He asks, "'maybe you want me to rescue you? ...you know I'm totally inept anyway." He sounded faintly smug about his own helplessness' (247). Thus, Duncan self-consciously, if not actively, occupies the margins, which means that Marian has to solve her own problems; as Hobgood says, 'He is best understood as a catalyst for an experiment activated by Marian on her own terms' (n.pag.).

Indeed, the protagonists must each escape their victimhood themselves; rescue would be inconsistent with independence. The other man of each novel is simply an element in this. Although they cannot share the third, female facet of triangular identity, the other men are nevertheless Other. As representatives of marginalisation over convention, they are logical partners for the protagonists; indeed, their various contrasts with patriarchal and anthropocentric norms help to raise the protagonists' awareness of their own oppression, contributing to their project of self-liberation.

Lignes de fuite

Already, animals in these novels have served to help the protagonists to recognise and define their victimhood, and they may help them to escape oppression. As part of their concept of 'becoming animal', Deleuze and Guattari say that animals can indicate *lignes de fuite*, 'ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself' (Deleuze and Guattari in Baker, 120). This is an escape from what they call the 'oedipal' structures of the dominant culture, towards something more collective and 'minoritarian', 'in which one of the things questioned and resisted is any authoritarian imposition of sense or meaning, and any officially sanctioned forms of interpretation or representation' (Baker, 104-113). In *The Edible Woman* and *Surfacing*, animals contribute to the protagonists' attempt to escape from the hegemonic structures of androcentrism, colonialism and anthropocentrism. Within their identification with the margins, however, there are limits to how far Atwood's protagonists can be said to align with Deleuze and Guattari's concepts.

Although other animals do not often interact directly with Atwood's protagonists, animals can sometimes indicate escape. In some cases, they stand alone as an indicator, and sometimes they function in combination with femininity and postcolonialism, to point out alternatives. In *The Edible Woman*, Peter's violence towards the animal world is what suggests to Marian both the cause of her oppression and, eventually, a means of escape from assimilation as his wife. Peter appears as hunter (of rabbits) and consumer (of steak), and inhabits a sterile environment. Whenever he is playing his hunting role, Marian assumes the

role of the quarry. The rabbit that he talks about seems to suggest a line of flight to Marian. After hearing about the hunt, she runs away from Peter, and, when recaptured, hides under a bed, 'underground, I had dug myself a private burrow' (76). She also enacts escape from the human world to the natural one; this is how she reacts to his photography and to his sterile apartment during his party. She escapes first to the laundromat to find Duncan. Although this looks like an escape to another human, Duncan is, as I have said, seen in terms of other animals as well. However, in the laundromat, Marian feels 'confronted only by the long white row of machines' (246). 'Even talking was impossible in this white room with its rows of glass windows and its all-pervading smell of soap and bleach' (247). Duncan responds appropriately by taking her out of the city to a ravine, a natural environment, where she is able to think more clearly (263). Whether or not her identification with other animals actually allows her to escape, her apparently irrational inclinations, to burrow or to flee, demonstrate an alternative thought pattern that is in alignment with the instincts of, for instance, a rabbit. In this sense, her identification with other animals may facilitate escape on a conceptual level.

In *Surfacing*, although there are fewer instances of chase than in *The Edible Woman*, animals again suggest an escape from conventional thought patterns. One of the narrator's concerns is an almost Romantic fear that humans have become so concentrated on reason that they have lost mind-body harmony. She thinks, 'If the head extended directly into the shoulders like a worm's or a frog's ... they would have to realize that if the head is detached from the body both of them will die' (70). She starts to reject human language too, 'the names of things fading but their forms and uses remaining, the animals learned what to eat without nouns' (144). She is thinking this way when David comes upon her and tries to talk to her. 'I had to concentrate in order to talk to him, the English words seemed imported, foreign' (144). In contrast, she observes that 'the animals don't lie' (147). When the other humans suggest that she hates men, she realises that 'it wasn't the men I hated, it was the Americans, the human beings, men and women both. They'd had their chance but they had turned against the gods, and it was time for me to choose sides' (148). This decision shows that, first and foremost, she has chosen an animal response to problems involving men and postcolonialism. Towards the end of the novel, when she remains alone on the island, she attempts actively to blur the boundaries between humans and other animals, thus possibly enacting another of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas: becoming.

Symbolic creativity and 'becoming'

Conceptual escape, the escape to a space outside conventional thought patterns, is for Deleuze and Guattari an escape towards a state of becoming. Braidotti writes that 'All becomings are

minoritarian, that is to say they inevitably and necessarily move into the direction of the 'others' of classical dualism...' (119), and can be seen either as a means of 'affirmative deconstruction of the dominant subject-position', or 'as stepping stones to a complex and open-ended process of de-personalization of the subject' (Braidotti, 119). In Atwood's work, potential instances of becoming occur during the protagonists' acts of creation and reclamation, which are the final demonstration of the protagonists' non-victimhood, of autonomy. In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris's reclamations effect changes in her world and that of the people around her, or work as a kind of legacy. In the other two novels, creative acts have a more symbolic significance, known only to the protagonists or to one or two other characters. Either way, such acts offer the protagonists a means of coping with their victim experiences. However, of the three novels, only *Surfacing*'s creativity can be said to contain an instance of becoming that approaches this latter state. Because creative acts and instances of becoming manifest in different ways and in different orders, I take each novel in turn.

Surfacing

Certain forms of creativity are present in *Surfacing* even before creative non-victimhood is attained. The narrator is already an artist in the general sense; she is a commercial illustrator (46), but marginalising expectations of women seem to cause her artistic frustration. Her teacher embodies masculine oppression yet again: 'For a while I was going to be a real artist; he thought that was cute but misguided... because there have never been any important women artists' (46). Her 'botched' attempt to draw princesses to illustrate fairytales (52), or rather, the fact that they are seen to be botched, seems to be a result of gender expectations, as female experience and especially female physicality are denied. '[T]he stories never revealed the essential things about them, such as what they ate, or whether their towers and dungeons had bathrooms, it was as though their bodies were pure air' (47-48). The protagonist struggles with this: 'now I compromise before I take the work in, it saves time' (47). Even now, she has difficulty creating these compromised drawings. Her princesses are accidentally realistic rather than airy in their physicality: the first looks 'stupefied', the next is 'crosseyed and has one breast bigger than the other' (48), the third is 'sprouting an enormous rear' (51). Because of the gender-prescriptive limitations placed on her art and on her subject matter, illustration is not working as a form of creativity; the narrator has to find activities that are more meaningful for her, by moving away from 'the dominant subject-position'.

To attain her non-victimhood, *Surfacing*'s protagonist must work to resolve the restrictions that have been imposed on her via gender, especially those associated with her abortion, as well as the aforementioned causes of oppression of United States colonialism and

anthropocentrism. In her acts of symbolic creativity, these problems and their solutions become intertwined. She moves away from logic, saying, 'From any rational point of view I am absurd; but there are no longer any rational points of view' (163). Already there is an echo of Deleuze and Guattari in this contrast of viewpoints. As Brian Massumi puts it, 'Becoming is directional rather than intentional. The direction it moves in may appear "unmotivated," "irrational," or "arbitrary" from the point of view of molarity' (95). *Surfacing*'s narrator now follows the points of view of a kind of natural theism, based on the gods that her father has found in rock paintings. 'These gods, here on the shore or in the water, unacknowledged or forgotten, were the only ones who had ever given me anything I needed; and freely' (139). She comes to believe that through these natural powers, she can achieve non-victimhood. The gods are another of Atwood's rare references to Native Canadians. *Surfacing*'s rock paintings approach her own references to the use of indigenous peoples as symbol, in that the rock paintings have been made by Native Canadians, and the gods depicted now offer the protagonist guidance as she tries to approach a natural, non-human state. Yet it becomes clear that although these gods offer a bond between humans and nature, often symbolised by indigenous peoples, Atwood uses them in a way that effectively bypasses such cultures. When, following her father's grid references, she fails to find any rock paintings at certain places, the protagonist concludes that her father must have started to find the sites of power unaided. She thinks,

> The Indians did not own salvation but they had once known where it lived and their signs marked the sacred places, the places where you could learn the truth. There was no painting at White Birch Lake and none here, because his later drawings weren't copied from things on the rocks. He had discovered new places, new oracles, he was seeing the way I had seen, true vision, after the failure of logic (139).

If she and her father can do this by themselves, then these are not the gods of a particular culture; they are not human gods at all but natural powers to which humans have access. Thus, Atwood makes the Native Canadians almost superfluous to requirements, again ensuring that her own protagonist can occupy the position of colonised and can develop almost unaided.

There is of course a sense in which following the dictates of deities contradicts the idea of personal agency. In 'Evolving Focus on Human Agency in Contemporary Social Theory,' Piotr Sztompka notes that 'In the beginning [agency] was placed outside of the human and social world, in the domain of the supernatural. Whether in the guise of animistic

forces, personified deities, singular gods, or metaphysical providence, the agency was always operating from the outside…' (25). In *Surfacing*, the protagonist thinks about the gods, who control her, as belonging to the past (183). She seems to be swapping one structure for another as she tries to escape modernity and humanity, but because they represent the past and nature, they liberate her and allow her to act where she couldn't before, in a way that leads her towards something more like becoming. The protagonist uses the insights that these gods offer to reread two images from her own childhood scrapbook, of 'a woman with a round moon stomach: the baby was sitting up inside her, gazing out. Opposite her was a man with horns on his head like cow horns and a barbed tail' (152). She decides, 'I had to read their new meaning with the help of the power' (152). The meaning, it seems, is that she should make a symbolic compensation for her aborted fœtus. She takes Joe out of the cabin and into the trees to conceive with him 'naturally' (155). She does not seem to see this as a new life, but the revival of the old one. 'I can feel my lost child surfacing within me, forgiving me, rising from the lake where it has been imprisoned for so long' (155-156).

> This time I will do it by myself, squatting … I'll lick it off and bite the cord, the blood returning to the ground … In the morning I will be able to see it: it will be covered with shining fur, a god, I will never teach it any words (156).

The protagonist's rebirth ritual can be seen as becoming-woman, because the narrator is resisting her previous acceptance of male control over life and death, and instead, takes control herself. It can also be seen as a form of becoming-animal; her desire for alliance with the non-human makes her want to conceive outside in a natural environment, and she intends the birth and the child to conform to her ideals of anti-anthropocentric existence.

Having conceived (possibly), the protagonist rejects the human world that has victimised her animality. She believes that 'the others are already turning to metal, skins galvanizing, heads congealing to brass knobs, components and intricate wires ripening inside' (153), and now she believes that she can do the reverse: she can metamorphose into a nonhuman. 'I tried for all those years to be civilized but I'm not and I'm through pretending' (162). Again, the natural gods seem to suggest to her a way to enact this, through symbolic actions. Although these are destructive acts, they are positive in terms of her animality. 'I reverse the mirror so it's toward the wall, it no longer traps me' (169). 'The enclosure with the swing and the sandpile is forbidden, I know that without touching it' (170). The cabin and her human belongings become prohibited too, and she burns and breaks what she can. 'These husks are not needed any longer, I abolish them, I have to clear a space' (171). After this

symbolic destruction of her humanity, she leaves the cabin, 'that cage, wooden rectangle' (172), taking only a blanket. 'I will need it until the fur grows' (171). She has stopped seeing herself as human, although she acknowledges that others might. 'They'll mistake me for a human being, a naked woman wrapped in a blanket... They won't be able to tell what I really am' (177). It is clear from this passage that what she thinks she 'really is' is a nonhuman animal.

Although for a time the protagonist believes in and wants metamorphosis in this way, the species change does not 'really' take place, and if it did, this would not be what Deleuze and Guattari mean by becoming animal. However, an *imagined* animal metamorphosis is perhaps more relevant to their concept. Massumi writes: 'Becoming is bodily thought, beyond the realm of possibility, in the world of the virtual' (99). It seems that the narrator is trying to fit herself into a collective animal psyche. As mentioned above, she is trying to behave according to her belief that she is no longer human, either in the sense that she is a human animal, or in the sense that she is in a virtual way not human at all, but some other, unspecified animal. She believes that the rules governing her behaviour are set by the natural gods, who, by instilling her with fear as a deterrent, prevent her from doing human things or inhabiting human places. Indeed these gods, who have no species and who are never individuated, seem to be the 'embodiment' of this philosophy; even though there are pictures of them, they do not seem to have any defined subjectivity, but are simply natural beings to whose influence she attributes her changed behaviour. As a part of this, she increasingly experiences what Braidotti means by 'the depersonalization of the subject'. Although she continues to use the word 'I' (never 'we,' for instance) her self perception moves from feeling human (124), to non-human (177), to moments resembling becoming. Once she believes that she is pregnant, she hides from the other humans in the decay of the swamp, where she thinks of herself as part of the natural cycle. 'I remember the heron; by now it will be insects, frogs, fish, other herons. My body also changes, the creature in me, plant-animal, sends out filaments in me; I ferry it secure between death and life, I multiply' (162). This resonates with becoming; as Nick Mansfield writes, in his explanation of the concept, 'Everything is always crossing over into something else, decomposing and recomposing itself beneath the identities truth would like to erect' (145). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we 'reconceive of our being-in-the-world as and endless becoming new and otherwise' (Mansfield, 146), which is what *Surfacing*'s protagonist seems to be doing here as she 'multiplies'. A later, more definitive moment of becoming is separated from the body of the text and without full stops:

> The animals have no need for speech, why talk when you are a word
> I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning
> I break out again into the bright sun and crumple, head against the ground
> I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place (175)

Subjectivity has all but disappeared in this moment; as Baker writes of becoming, 'There isn't a subject; *there are only collective assemblages*' (2000, 117). The next sentences read: 'I get up. Through the ground, break surface, I'm standing now, *separate again*' (175, my emphasis). This unmistakably defines the moment as a – transient – instance of collective assemblage.

The Blind Assassin

Iris is much less concerned with other animals; her identification with the margins concentrates on women, and she certainly has no sympathy for masculine subjectivity. Even within this though, she does not demonstrate the temporary collectivity, voluntary or accidental, that the other two protagonists experience. Iris undergoes a more permanent change, and the main connection with other animals is that they are used to illustrate the difference in her. Iris seizes agency when she decisively rejects her marriage, because of Laura's death. She takes her daughter Aimée and moves away, leaving a note for Richard, in which she demonstrates some awareness of her own power.

> I said that in view of what he'd done – what I now knew he'd done – I never wanted to see him again ... I had ample proof of his scurrilous behaviour in the form of Laura's notebooks... If he had any ideas about getting his filthy hands on Aimée, he should discard them, because I would then create a very, very large scandal, as I would also do should he fail to meet my financial requests (613).

She is no longer a victim; she is turning the tables and finding ways to victimise Richard and Winifred, a point emphasised by her choice of animal imagery. The canine, feline and reptile images used to describe Richard and Winifred are now being applied to Iris herself. Iris sees Winifred shopping with Sabrina, and watches them.

> Winifred gave her arm a jerk, and looked around nervously. She didn't see me, but she sensed me, the way a cow in a well-fenced field will sense a wolf. Even so, cows

> aren't like wild animals; they're used to being protected. Winifred was skittish, but she wasn't frightened (534-35).

Thus, Iris is now the threat, and this shows in face to face confrontations with Winifred too.

> "Keep your voice down," she hissed. "People are looking."
> "They'll look anyway ... with you dressed up like Lady Astor's horse. You know, that colour of green doesn't suit you one bit, especially at your present age. It never has, really. It makes you look bilious." This hit home. Winifred was finding it hard going: she wasn't used to this new, viperish aspect of me (618).

Again, then, animals in *The Blind Assassin* appear chiefly as part of such metaphors, which means that they do not conform to the idea of becoming-animal.

The connection between Iris's creative agency and Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of becoming lies in her writing. One of their examples of creativity on the margins is 'what they call 'minor' literatures, the modified popular forms of expression of relatively marginalized peoples around the world, which do not necessarily respect the sense-making structures of the languages which they modify' (Baker, 2000, 104). Deleuze and Guattari say, 'Becoming-minoritarian is a political affair and necessitates a labour of power (*puissance*), an active micropolitics' (Deleuze and Guattari in Baker, 104). Similarly, Massumi writes that 'Becoming-other is thoroughly political' (102-103).

> The social movements of Blacks, aboriginals, feminists, gays and lesbians – of groups relegated to sub-Standard conditions – provide far better frames of reference ... Any population, no matter how oppressed (molarly compressed), envelops more affects or potential actions than the most ingenious individual body (103).

This 'micropolitics' is what Iris's writing seems to offer, when, as the culmination of her vengeful agency, she becomes an author. Pretending that it is a posthumous publication of Laura's work, she releases a novel of a clandestine relationship between anonymous lovers. This book, also called *The Blind Assassin*, is in fact Iris's work, and its characters are really she and Alex. 'I wanted a memorial. That was how it began. For Alex, but also for myself. It was no great leap from that to naming Laura as the author' (626). Thus, she casts Alex, who occupies the margins both politically and from Richard and Winifred's point of view, as a protagonist, changing his position in power structures, and does the same for Laura,

avenging her by attributing the book to her. When the book is published, 'I received six free copies ... I gave one of them to Richard' (348).

> He was found with the book at his elbow ... Winifred phoned in a state of hysteria and told me so. "How could you have done this to him?" she said. "You destroyed his political career, and then you destroyed his memories of Laura" (624-25).

Other instances of becoming-minoritarian in Iris's book are her rejections of the 'sense-making structures' of the 'dominant subject-position', as Baker and Braidotti put it. Most significantly in terms of nonhuman animals, the structures that she resists include centre-margin assumptions underlying the status-bearing fur garments which exploit women, the lower classes, and animals. Describing one of the neighbourhoods where Alex lives in hiding, she exposes the impact of the wealthy, androcentric, anthropocentric majority on others, in one of her most overt moments of sympathy for other animals as well as human groups, as previously cited.

> It's a region of kosher butchers; also of tailors, of wholesale furriers. And sweatshops, no doubt. Rows of immigrant women hunched over machines, their lungs filling with lint... Someone's fingers, right around here, must have sewn the ermine trim on her white chiffon evening cape. The contrast of fragile veil and rank animal pelt, that's what appeals to the gentlemen. Delicate flesh, then the shrubbery (418).

In this way, as Iris finds creative agency and undermines her oppressor through her writing, she might also be said to become-minoritarian by viewing the impact of dominant structures from an external, marginalised viewpoint.

Iris's micropolitical project continues in her second, overtly authored narrative too. Atwood writes, 'I assume that *by definition* an author is in Position Four at the moment of writing' (1972, 40, Atwood's emphasis), and now that Iris asserts her authorship, this can be applied to her. Her narrative has much in common with postcolonial and feminist historical projects. She rewrites history, setting her version of the truth against public belief. Extracts from various newspapers and other publications from throughout her life illustrate this often erroneous, constructed version of events, and an article on Richard's death from *The Globe and Mail* provides a useful summary of such points. 'Mr. Griffen was the brother-in-law of the late Laura Chase, who made her posthumous début as a novelist this spring ... as well as by his ten-year-old daughter Aimée' (17-18). Iris's second narrative reveals that Laura was

not the novelist and that Aimée was not Richard's but Alex's daughter. Thus, her micropolitical reclamation of history is a reclamation for herself and for Alex, and in turn offers Sabrina the truth about her origins. 'Your real grandfather was Alex Thomas' (627). Although, at her death, Iris is still defined by her relationship to others – 'noted local authoress Laura Chase' (633), and her father, grandfather, and Richard and Winifred – the article states that Sabrina has returned and is expected 'to see to her grandmother's affairs' (633). This means that there is a chance that, as Iris hopes, Sabrina will read her second narrative and learn the truth according to Iris.

The Edible Woman

Marian is unlike the other two protagonists in that although she goes through phases that resemble becoming, these occur only while she is still a victim, and not as part of her symbolic creative acts. The question of Marian's subjectivity turns on the central section of her narrative, in which she thinks of herself in the third person. Jennifer Hobgood applies Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to parts II and III of the novel, arguing that 'Marian experiences a deterritorialization--the novel shifts abruptly from the first- into the third-person point of view where schizophrenia is prominent in the novel' (n.pag.). Hobgood finds that 'Rather than indicating a repressed subject,' Marian's failure to think of herself in the first person 'opens a new realm of possibility that Deleuze and Guattari describe. "There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word I, and that we must restore his ability to pronounce this hallowed word"' (Deleuze and Guattari in Hobgood, n.pag.). This is certainly a way in which Marian *could* become; however, loss of the first person alone does not necessarily mean that she does.

Another consideration in terms of becoming is the role of the animal. Hobgood does not seem especially concerned with it, but Marian also inclines in this direction. Although she does not believe that she is turning into another animal, some of her reactions to her environment have a lot in common with the behaviour of *Surfacing*'s narrator during her nonhuman phase. Marian becomes disturbed by the artificiality of the human world, especially where this is associated with Peter. She feels trapped in her new clothes, bought for Peter's party. 'Under the cloth and the metal bones and elastic her flesh felt numbed and compressed' (245). As she flees from this party, she notices a sound in the lobby, 'the thin sound glass would make, icy as the tinkle of a chandelier, it was the high electric vibration of this glittering place' (245). Marian is finding the human world to be sterile, almost toxically so, and she is very aware of senses other than sight. Since she is finding the human world so unnatural, it seems that Marian may be adopting an animal perspective too.

Adams's interpretation of Marian's behaviour takes this a step further. Her approach inclines in the opposite direction from Hobgood's; she is primarily concerned with animals. She sees a real collectivity, a depersonalisation of the subject, in Marian's apparent identification with other animals during the central section.

> Both meat eating and first-person narration are suspended once Marian intuits her link to other animals, suggesting that a challenge to meat eating is linked to an attack on the sovereign individual subject. The fluid, merged subjectivity of the middle part of the book finds mystical identity with things, especially animals, that are consumed (Adams, 1990, 131).

Although Adams is not dealing with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas here, there seems to be a certain relationship between her point and the notion of becoming. If Marian's distance from herself represents a distance from subjectivity, including masculine subjectivity, and if this is caused by an alliance with the consumed, then it could be said that this indicates becoming-woman and becoming-animal. However, this is conditional on whether she *does* 'intuit her link to other animals' in the way that Adams suggests.

The nature of Marian's act of creativity clearly stems from her relationship to the consumed margins; what she creates is a concrete manifestation of her self as edible, resulting in a process of symbolic self-repossession through food. 'Her image was taking shape. Eggs. Flour. Lemons for the flavour. Sugar, icing-sugar, vanilla, salt, food-colouring' (267). Marian is recasting a previous incident (207), where she failed to eat a heart-shaped Valentine's cake (doubtless symbolising her inability to accept the relationship). Now, she makes a cake in the form of a woman and presents it to Peter, facing her ultimate fear by constructing a version of herself for his consumption. Because she uses food as her medium to do this, she could still be seen to be identifying with the consumed, in which case she is taking a risk by offering it to Peter. '"You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you," she said. "You've been trying to assimilate me. But I've made you a substitute, something you'll like much better. This is what you really wanted all along, isn't it?"' (271). Ironically, given that this is the first time that she really articulates this opinion, it is unclear whether Marian still believes it literally at this point. Certainly, however, if Peter felt comfortable with the idea of eating the cake, it seems likely that Marian would see this as further evidence of a threat to her. Even more than the other foods that Peter has been seen to consume, the cake obviously represents Marian, and she may feel alliance with it, at least at this point.

To some extent, then, the protagonists seem to challenge conventional notions of subjectivity in their creative agency, resisting the static, arborescent frameworks of centre and margin, like those proposed by Plumwood, and instead crossing the boundaries to seize power themselves. On occasion, even Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of the *ligne de fuite* and becoming-animal or becoming-woman seem to be applicable. The key reason behind this is the protagonist's identification with the margins. Although Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that becoming is not the same as 'a resemblance, an imitation, or ... an identification' (Deleuze and Guattari in Baker, 2000, 120-121), identification and becoming work together in Atwood's novels: the protagonists experience a sense of assemblage that approaches a-subjectivity as an extension of their identification. However, the protagonists are never left in this condition for long. Once they have carried out their acts of symbolic creativity to their satisfaction, they are demonstrably in Position Four, non-victimhood, and are therefore less likely to identify with other victims.

Outcomes

Re-victimisation: breaking out of the frame?

Now that the protagonists have accessed their own power, they are starting to align with the dominant culture instead of with other victims, and they move towards a more self-centred conception of identity. This means that the have gone from occupying the margins, a position of powerlessness, to a position of power. The implication of this in terms of Plumwood's ideas is that they are finding ways to break out of the framework by altering and sometimes reversing their position within it. However, the implication in terms of their relationship to other victims is less positive, and they may even victimise others in their turn; in fact, as I argue in the following chapter, this re-victimisation is in some senses inevitable. There is an apparent paradox here in that, on the one hand, that a victim can become an oppressor continues to counteract the fixedness of the centre-margin framework, but on the other, it seems that structured subjectivity has not been done away with after all.

Despite the identification with female, animal and Canadian victims that has contributed so greatly to their projects, none of the protagonists of these three novels manages to perform her acts of creative non-victimhood without victimising others in the process. The protagonist of *Surfacing* declares,

> This above all, to refuse to be a victim. Unless I can do that I can do nothing. I have to recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do

> will ever hurt anyone. A lie which was always much more disastrous than the truth would have been (185).

This is one of the clearest articulations in these novels of *Survival*'s Victim Positions, and of the potential dangers of unacknowledged power. This seems to be a common feature of de-victimisation across all three novels. The point is that power structures are not static, but although each becomes aware of this on some level, none of the protagonists recognises her power in time to stop herself from harming others.

In *Surfacing*, Joe is obviously the one to suffer the most during the protagonist's de-victimisation, because she exploits the feelings that he has for her. Already he has proposed to her and been rejected, and it comes out that she does not love him and intends to leave him on their return to the city. Their relationship appears to be over. Then, however, her approach to his physicality changes abruptly. Previously, his humanity was off-putting to her; now she decides she needs to use his body in order to conceive – just like *The Edible Woman*'s Ainsley, whose behaviour is shown to be cruel and unethical. Afterwards, the protagonist thinks, 'he's given me the part of himself I needed. I'll take him back to the cabin ... then I can let him go' (156). It is as if she is thinking of the capture and release of an animal, like the frogs that she collects for fishing, but then sets free. What she overlooks is that for Joe, this is not release but abandonment. Although Joe has given her what she needs, she has not reciprocated. On the contrary, if she is pregnant then she is taking his child from him just as her fœtus was taken from her. The next morning, she simply goes back to seeing him as a human threat to her animality. 'He still doesn't understand, he thinks he has won, act of his flesh a rope noosed around my neck, leash, he will lead me back to the city and tie me to fences, doorknobs' (157). This seems to be a rather ungenerous interpretation of what Joe is probably feeling; she has not, after all, given him any explanation. When they cannot find her to take the boat off the island, Joe looks for her, then 'reappears, stumping back down the hill to them, shoulders sloped in defeat. Perhaps by now he understands' (163). Thus, although she does reciprocate his feelings at the very end of the novel, the protagonist's preoccupations with herself, with childbearing and with nature, override any concern for Joe until after she has exploited him to fulfill these goals. Whether or not he ever could, Joe cannot now be seen as the oppressor; he is clearly marginalised by the protagonist. Their positions in terms of the framework have been reversed, undermining the stability of such a model.

The Blind Assassin does not offer a character like Joe, whom the protagonist sees as an oppressor but who might well fall into the victim category; rather, somewhat illogically

perhaps, Iris questions only her own position in terms of power relations. She does not seem to feel remorse over the possibly fatal effect of her non-victim creativity on Richard; she seems to feel that his suffering is a just punishment for having victimised her in the first place, and it is difficult for the reader to gain sufficient perspective to disagree. The possibility of victim-oppressor transition is overtly addressed, however, with much discomfort on Iris's part. That she chooses the same predators to represent her transition to non-victimhood that she used to represent her victimisation emphasises her present awareness of just how fluid the boundaries are between victim and oppressor. 'I didn't know I might become a tiger myself ... Anyone might, for that matter' (402). Indeed, the most significant instance of the title's blind assassin is Iris herself; she considers that she has driven Laura to suicide. 'How could I have been so ignorant? So stupid, so unseeing, so given over to carelessness' (632).

Unlike the other two protagonists, Marian is not concerned about the misuse of her developing agency. However, Duncan suggests that she might have victimised her perceived oppressor, thus offering the reader a perspective on *The Edible Woman* that is missing from *The Blind Assassin*. He says,

> "Peter wasn't trying to destroy you. That's just something you made up. Actually you were trying to destroy him."
> I had a sinking feeling. "Is that true?" I asked.
> "Search your soul," he said (280).

Marian does not search her soul, because Duncan does not pursue the idea, but there is some evidence for this view of Marian. The day after Peter proposes, she says, 'I could feel the stirrings of the proprietary instinct. So this object, then, belonged to *me*' (90). The same day, doodling on her telephone pad, she draws 'a cross-hatch of intersecting lines' and 'a small spider in one corner of the maze of lines' (107). It is possible to interpret this as a symptom of identification with a predator or consumer, especially when taken in connection with the image of Len trapped in Ainsley's spider web (214), which I mentioned in chapter two. At one point, she even begins to see Peter as a trophy. As she admires him and thinks that '...anyone seeing him would find him exceptionally handsome," she feels a 'sense of proud ownership ... at being there with him in that more or less public way...' (146-47). These possessive tendencies could imply either that Marian is an oppressor and never a victim, or that if she is a victim initially, to escape victimhood has meant becoming an oppressor. Thus, Marian's position in the novel's power relations is drawn into question without ever being resolved, opening up even more doubt as to the stability of perceived power structures.

In all three novels, then, the static, artificial nature of arborescent power structures, like those frameworks of centrism proposed by Plumwood, is blurred and undermined by the changing positions of Atwood's protagonists. Even when they believe themselves to be victims, women can exploit men, and as I emphasise in the following chapter, women and Canadians can exploit animals. Re-victimisation in these novels seems to mean that rather than offering liberation, the Victim Positions that Atwood proposes in *Survival* result instead in a cycle of victimisation, where ex-victims begin to exploit. Although Duncan questions Marian's victim role in *The Edible Woman*, and Iris is faced with herself as a blind assassin, re-victimisation is a problem that is never resolved; the protagonists tend to be abandoned with this potential guilt at the ends of their novels. Just as, in *Survival,* Atwood opposes victims with 'victors,' the implication is that she is conflating triumph and oppression.

Reconciling subjectivity

However, if the protagonists seem, in their re-victimising tendencies, to be crossing the line between centre and margin, their approach to subjectivity is somewhat less revolutionary. Despite the fact that all three novels share some philosophical ground with the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari, this is often undermined by the protagonists' reconciliation of their identity; in other words, they move towards a consistently individuated subjectivity. Therefore, although they undermine the static nature of structured power relations, they do not dispense with or escape them altogether; rather, they simply move to a different position within the structure. This apparently ambivalent attitude to structures can be explained by the application of what Abrams calls identity theory. Abrams uses this as a collective term to explain the way a concern with specific victimised groups prioritises their liberation over the generalised dismantling of subjectivity. I retain this term here because although Atwood is interested in more than one specific victim group, her approaches to structure and identity match those of identity theory.

In *Surfacing* and *The Edible Woman*, reconciliation of the self takes the form of unification. In *Surfacing*, this is signalled when, near the end of the novel, the narrator simply wakes one morning to find that the natural gods

> ...have gone finally, back into the earth, the air, the water, wherever they were when I summoned them. The rules are over... I am the only one left alive on the island. They were here though, I trust that. I saw them and they spoke to me, in the other language (182).

She returns to a more quotidian reality, remembering the other characters and reasonably acknowledging that, 'I can't stay here forever, there isn't enough food' (183). She still seems to believe in what has happened to her, but accepts that her non-human behaviour is unsustainable.

> I turn the mirror around: in it there's a creature neither animal nor human, furless, only a dirty blanket ... This was the stereotype, straws in the hair, talking nonsense or not talking at all... That is the real danger now, the hospital or the zoo, where we are put, species and individual, when we can no longer cope. They would never believe it's only a natural woman, state of nature (184).

What she is recognising here is that a state of becoming is exceptionally difficult to maintain. Massumi writes:

> When supermolecularity succeeds, the forces of molarity must either accommodate or kill it. Accommodating a supermolecule means adapting the grid of molar identities to it. A new category is added to the recognized list, and procedures are established to ensure that the integration of the new kind of body into the shared environment does not upset the general equilibrium. A life-space opens, but it is no sooner surveyed than institutionalized, or captured: molarity is an apparatus of capture of energies that escape it (101).

Surfacing's alternatives of the hospital or the zoo describe this kind of institutionalisation or capture. However, the protagonist's very mention of such points suggests her reluctance to re-enter to the human world. *Surfacing* differs from the other two novels in that the protagonist retains a degree of triangular identification. Gender is an important part of her identity even at the end of the novel, because although Joe is no longer a threat, it is still possible that she is pregnant, in which case her act of creative compensation would remain to her as a resolution of her abortion trauma. It also means that she has a responsibility to her unborn child not to endanger it by remaining on the island, at the mercy of the elements.

> No god and perhaps not even real, even that is uncertain: I can't know yet, it's too early. But I assume it: if I die it dies, if I starve it starves with me. It might be the first one, the first true human; it must be born, allowed (185).

Her attitude to Canada and the United States remains too, although she seems to feel more hopeful about it. '...the pervasive menace, the Americans. They exist, they're advancing, they must be dealt with, but possibly they can be watched and predicted and stopped without being copied' (183). In these respects, *Surfacing*'s identification with the margins remains in place, even with the attainment of non-victimhood. However, as in the other novels, the role of the nonhuman has diminished. It is implied that the protagonist will, like the other protagonists, return to the human world; nature has relinquished its claim on her and has ceased to aid her. The natural gods have 'receded, back to the past ... from now on I'll have to live in the usual way, defining them by their absence ...' (183). 'The lake is quiet, the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing' (186).

In many respects, Marian, in *The Edible Woman*, has less triangular identification to lose. I argue that despite Hobgood and Adams's interpretations, Marian does not quite 'become,' even in the central section (Part II) when she cannot eat and loses her sense of the first person. For one thing, first person narration is replaced with the third person limited, meaning that the narrative still concentrates on Marian individually. Therefore, this is not a loss of subjectivity; it is simply a *distance from* subjectivity. It does not, for instance, suggest the collectivity that the first person plural might offer, and this is not something that Marian wants. As Braidotti puts it, 'The different stages or levels of becoming trace an itinerary that consists in erasing and recomposing the former boundaries between self and others' (119). Marian is far from erasing boundaries between her self and others; although part of her identifies with animals (and only as members of 'the consumed'), there is also a distinct, narrating self that is detached from this process and even actively resists it. She never *deliberately* embraces the merged subjectivity that Adams applauds; as is shown by her reaction mass female identity, which I discussed in chapter three, Marian is afraid of sharing in any kind of collectivity. She is very possessive of her identity, and if the very cause of her non-eating phase is her desire to retain individuality, through independence from the very life-cycles which *Surfacing* embraces, then this seems to contradict becoming.

Marian's act of creative self-reclamation also demonstrates that her ultimate goal has to do with individuality. Peter does not eat the cake that she makes; he leaves instead, at which point the relationship seems to be over. Marian is therefore free of the fear: it is unfounded; Peter cannot consume her metaphorically or literally. No longer at risk of consumption herself, then, food is no longer something with which to identify and she can eat again, beginning with her own cake. She is no longer affected by associations between women and food, and so the way outward from a possible becoming-woman to further becoming is now closed. Instead, Marian reclaims herself in two ways: physically, because

she has not been able to eat anything until now, and symbolically, by assimilating her own form.[3] Although Ainsley's reaction is horror: "Marian! ... You're rejecting your femininity!" (272), it appears that Marian is doing the opposite: she is accepting and reclaiming herself.

In the case of *The Blind Assassin*, the protagonist's subjectivity is differently constructed. This is the most recent of Atwood's novels to be treated here, and logically, it contains the most postmodern notions of self. Indeed, Iris's inner conflict can only be managed through her writing, not solved. For her, gender is the most definitive of the three facets of triangular identity. It has functioned to sanction Richard's (and by association, Winifred's) victimisation of her as his wife, and it is via gender that Richard's anthropocentrism and neo-colonialism threaten the animal and Canadian aspects of her self. However, even gender seems to lose its importance in comparison to Iris's concern with Laura's unchangeable victimhood. Reconciliation for Iris can go no further than the simple acceptance, by her present self, of her past as the blind assassin. Remedy and self-unification are impossible, even on a symbolic level, because she cannot undo her sister's death. Having escaped her oppressive husband, she is now trying simply to cope with *what cannot be resolved.* Her writing is an attempt to accept this. Therefore, although it reveals important female and sometimes Canadian and animal facets to her identity, Iris's writing is also removed from becoming in that she has, first and foremost, a very personal goal. It is a self-centred project, concerned with giving her own view and asserting her own independence. Again then, although Iris does, to her regret, move within the power structure from victim to oppressor and therefore demonstrates its unfixed nature, her own independence is in direct opposition with the collective assemblage that escapes structure, which is the goal of becoming. Her project is, like the other protagonists', the identity theorist's project of liberation through self-reclamation.

For a time, then, triangular identification with other female, Canadian or animal victims plays an important part in the identity of Atwood's protagonists, and when their preoccupations are intensified in their magnification phases, they sometimes appear to take a collective, rhizomatic approach to identity. Either at this time or as a result, they perform symbolic acts of creativity, demonstrating their determined refusal of victimhood; their refusal to accept the apparently fixed frameworks of centre and other. However, especially once the protagonists reach non-victimhood, it becomes clear that they each have a lasting personal agenda that remains the priority. The nature of liberation in these novels ultimately

---

[3] As Hobgood shows, it is also possible to read Marian's progression in terms of consumer capitalism, either as liberation from it or a re-entry into it.

returns to its overriding element of identity theory, rather than continuing to radicalise and destabilise notions of subjectivity. What is elucidating about the application of an idea like becoming, though, is that it reveals the limitations of Atwood's own model of de-victimisation. Ultimately, the de-victimisation process as carried out by her protagonists perpetuates victimhood, because it fails to dismantle power structures; the distinctions between centre and margin are resisted, but what the protagonists seem to object to is not the centre per se, but the fact that it marginalises them. Therefore, although they undermine the static nature of the centre-margin model, they simply move to a different position within a social structure. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, this is still an aborescent structure, not a rhizomatic one, which means that the protagonists have been 'reterritorialized'. Only Iris is concerned by the negative implications of this. Thus, the pervading philosophy of reclaiming subjectivity in these novels, which is necessary to identity theory, ultimately works to undo the potential assemblage suggested by triangular identification, as the protagonists return to an individuated, if more liberated, self-possession.

5. Triangular identification: literary exploitation?

'The animals die that we may live...'

-Surfacing

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that in *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*, the protagonists' 'triangular identification,' that is, their sense of connection with other animals, women and Canada, serves to assist their own de-victimisation process as mapped out in Atwood's Victim Positions. Section one looked at the parallels which lead to triangular identification, and the ways in which it highlights the protagonists' own positions and moves them to act. In section two, I suggested that at its most extreme, triangular identification might even lead them to replace subjectivity, for a time, with a more collective way of being; what Deleuze and Guattari call an assemblage. However, this is both selective and temporary. Once they feel that they are no longer victims, Atwood's protagonists seem to set aside, to some extent, their empathy with the margins. This does not mean that womanhood, Canada and animality are no longer parts of the protagonists' identities. However, the concern with the marginalisation of women, Canada and animals decreases as the protagonists liberate themselves and their subjectivity becomes more unified. The effect of this in terms of overall philosophy is that the protagonists aim for a reconciled, coherent subjectivity, more characteristic of identity theory than of poststructuralism, and contrary to the idea of becoming. In this final chapter, I suggest that if this is the fate of triangular identification, this must in turn have significant implications for the roles of Canada, women and especially animals. I shall discuss animals in particular, the most distant of the marginalised groups involved here, in terms of the politics of writing the margins, looking at animal transformations, symbols and metaphors, as well as the role of animals in the diegesis.

Canada

Where the protagonists identify with Canada, they do so because they are Canadian and because Canada is or has been a colony. In chapter two, I explored a connection between colonised Canada and the hunted, and in chapter three, between colonised Canada and female and animal victims of appropriation. The colonisation of Canada is represented in two ways: in terms of European imperialism, and in terms of a more contemporary threat from the United States. In *Surfacing*, the greatest threat is clearly the latter. The protagonist's identification with nature overlaps with her identification with Canada. This in turn means that she equates humans with 'Americans' as the source of a threat. The influence of the United States appears with increasing

proximity until the protagonist starts to see any humans, especially the misogynistic camera-hunter David, as 'Americans' who are evolving into cyborgs or machines, and she tries to escape her own species. In *The Blind Assassin*, most of which is set much earlier than *Surfacing*, possible colonisers also include Britain and France as Iris's Canada is incorporated into Europe's war. At home, the novel's class relations also contain vestiges of imperialism, as represented by the nouveau-riche Richard and at the other end of the scale, Alex. Richard also appropriates Iris as a vehicle for display, and the connection with colonialism is emphasised when, as a young bride, she is sent to view imperial exhibits and monuments in Europe, including animal trophies. Thus, in both of these novels, the broader politics of colonisation also apply on other smaller and more personal levels. Indeed, Canada's chief role in terms of de-victimisation is to parallel the protagonists' concerns. This is its only role in *The Edible Woman*. Unlike the other protagonists, Marian never overtly likens her situation to that of the colonised. However, like David, Peter hunts both literally and with the camera, and like Richard, he appropriates and displays Marian's identity, just as the coloniser appropriates and displays the colony. Thus, colonial and postcolonial discourse in these novels appear chiefly as a means of illustrating or paralleling the oppression, past or present, of the protagonist. However, as is clear from the absence of Native Canadians from Atwood's treatment of colonised Canada, colonialism for Atwood seems to be more about an almost psychological victimisation of *the nation in general* than about the realities of internal cultural conflict resulting from Western conquest.

Feminism

Being female is a necessary part of identity in these novels, because the protagonists cannot cast off the influence of gender unless society changes, or unless they live outside society. Each protagonist engages in gendered conflict, negotiating the influence of would-be dominant male characters. In chapter two I looked at the ways in which such men were figured in terms of cruel human or animal hunters pursuing female prey, although in *The Edible Woman* especially, these gender roles are also inverted. Chapter three dealt with the results of this in terms of gendered appropriation and assimilation. In the second section, I noted that the resistance to the patriarchal centre, especially when male characters do this too, has something in common with becoming-woman, although when the focus is on women only, this part of the de-victimisation process manifests as feminism. However, when the protagonists' own female identity is no longer being victimised or marginalised, this apparent feminism subsides. As I have noted, Adams is disappointed to find that, in *The Edible Woman*, Marian 'begins to eat meat and to date men

again' (1990, 131). However, Adams views Marian's 'vegetarianism' as a positive statement resulting from 'a sexual war' (131), asserting that the novel's men are 'controlling, masculine men' (131), even though a sexual war is not the primary struggle in any of these novels.

Agency seems to be what is really at stake, in the sense of individual autonomy and power to act. As I suggested in the previous chapter, when this extends to re-victimisation (the victimisation of others by the ex-victim), the protagonists' actions do not liberate them from a structure of domination, but simply put them in a new position within it. Atwood's protagonists identify with other victims of the structure not purely out of sympathy, but as part of their resistance of the social order in their search for their own freedom to act. This is also more important than feminism. In *Surfacing*, the protagonist's preoccupation with artificial, human domination of the natural takes precedence over any sense of affinity with Anna, who, though very much victimised by gender relations, does not share the protagonist's other concerns. The protagonist is more worried that David is 'hybridising' under the influence of the United States than that he is misogynistic under the influence of patriarchy (146). In *The Edible Woman*, Peter is a threat because he is a photographer and a hunter, and because he wants to marry Marian, not because patriarchy frightens her (the relationship does not bother her until they become engaged) but because marriage threatens her discrete autonomy. In *The Blind Assassin*, Alex is not always sensitive to Iris (26, 37); he may even be another representative of gendered exploitation. He tells her that he has other relationships and that she is "first among equals" (424), and although he retracts this statement, his fidelity remains questionable because of it. However, when he says "Nobody's forcing you. You're free to go...", 'She doesn't move away' (26). What matters for Iris is exactly this freedom: she *chooses* to be with him. Therefore, in each novel, neither a resistance to patriarchy nor an affinity with women as its victims is as important to the protagonists as agency.

Because of their general, rather than selective, approach to identity theory, the protagonists' final position in terms subjectivity is not always satisfying from a specifically feminist, animal rights or postcolonial perspective, especially where it seems to entail a return to the oppressive centre. For example, Adams is almost sarcastic with regard to Marian's return to meat-eating and men in *The Edible Woman*. She writes,

> so profound a challenge to the status quo seems too much to sustain: after breaking her engagement and freeing herself from subjugation to her fiancé ... she has difficulty

> sustaining insights in opposition to the dominant world-view, and the pleasure of her own autonomy renders her less sensitive to others' oppression... (1990, 131).

However, as previously mentioned, Marian's avoidance of meat is not part of a conscious insight. In fact, it is undoubtedly intended to be symbolic; Atwood does not seem to reject meat-eating or to criticise Marian for returning to it, so what looks like a relapse to Adams is simply part of the reconciliation of identity which Atwood appears to consider necessary to non-victimhood. Having embraced the marginalised aspects of themselves, including animal, woman and Canadian, both *Surfacing*'s protagonist and Marian now work towards a more unified notion of self. In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris retains her inner confict, yet always thinks of herself as an individual. The process that all the protagonists go through aims towards self-knowledge in this way, and away from collectivity and the margins.

Triangular identification, then, tends to be a temporary phenomenon; a means of gaining new perspective on individual subjectivity. In this way, identification with women, with Canada or with animals is a *tool*, rather than an end in itself. Therefore, though triangular identification unifies the goals of postcolonial, feminist and animal theory, the phenomenon is temporary and artificial, and the protagonists ultimately perpetuate the marginalisation of these areas of Otherness. This re-victimisation raises the question of exploitation.

Representing animals: exploitation?

The role of the nonhuman offers the greatest insight into the implications of the margins in these novels. The protagonists are undeniably human and female, and demonstrate some awareness of their animality too. Beyond that, though, even *Surfacing* struggles to afford animals a place of equality with other marginalised groups. If triangular identification is used as a tool, the animal element in this is being used to serve the purposes of the centre, in ways that female and Canadian perspectives are not.

I have discussed the question of nonhuman animals in these novels in terms of the novels themselves, and in terms of the ideas that Atwood herself puts forward on the subject of de-victimisation. It seems only fair to consider the question from this perspective as a starting point, in order to understand the role that nonhuman animals might play for Atwood. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I shall address the problematic position of animals in the light of further considerations regarding the function of animals in literature. My approach here goes beyond the

aims of triangular identification and notions of human victimhood, in order to situate the issue of animals in a broader context.

In his introduction to the special edition of *Society and Animals* on representation, Steve Baker notes a possible schism in animal studies.

> On the one side, animal advocates, activists and academics who are directly concerned with the actual mistreatment of 'real' living animals; on the other, a group of rather self-indulgent scholars who seem more concerned with exploring fancy theories of representation than with addressing the real plight of the represented animals (2005, n.pag.).

However, 'it is never as simple as that' (2005, n.pag.). In both cases, understanding the representation of animals is important because how humans perceive animals, whether on a theoretical or an active level, determines how we treat them. John Simons provides a useful approach to the function of animals in literature. He divides animal literary devices into three categories: 'the use of animals as symbols; anthropomorphism; and narratives of transformation' (85). He writes, 'All other modes of representation are variants on these three main techniques' (85). Anthropomorphism is however absent from Atwood's novels; she writes that this approach to animals is typical of British literature. She remarks upon the 'essentially human nature of the protagonists' (73) and 'the invariably happy endings' (73), saying that 'English animal stories are about "social relations"' (74). According to Atwood, this does not apply in Canada, and in her own novels, apart from occasional instances of transformation, animals have a chiefly symbolic role.

Transformation

The category of transformation, as it applies to Atwood's work, has largely been covered in the previous chapters. *Surfacing* obviously contains the greatest degree of transformation, especially as Simons understands the concept:

> It is clear that the more closely identified with the non-human the fictive world becomes, then the more its representational strategies will tend towards the blurring or challenging of the boundary between the human and the non-human. Indeed, it might be said that in

> texts where this boundary is allowed to become porous there is a striving towards the impossible task of actually reproducing what it is to be an animal (140).

This is something which *Surfacing*'s protagonist wants to believe in. For her, the boundaries blur between other humans and 'Americans' on the one hand, and herself and other animals on the other. As previously discussed, she tries to be nonhuman by following the rules of natural gods, which induce her to behave as other animals do, or seem to. As Simons writes of one of his examples, 'In this type of representational strategy the non-human becomes the repository of a different kind of understanding' (171), lost to the human 'but redeemable through his or her contemplation of the animal world' (171). In *Surfacing*, the understanding offered by the pro-animals perspective may be read in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal: through such contemplation, the protagonist starts to think in ways that are not anthropocentric, sometimes to the point that her subjectivity is replaced by a sense of collective being as she tries to reproduce or to access non-human experience. However, this is not a magic realist novel. Simons asks, 'How can we dissociate ourselves from ourselves and enter an animal world?' (7). The inevitable answer is that we cannot. The protagonist of *Surfacing* tries to, and she may become-animal in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, but she still remains human. At the end of the novel, even she recognises that literal transformation is impossible. For Atwood, animal transformation is instead representative of something else. As with *The Blind Assassin*'s changing animal-referents, *Surfacing*'s animal transformation therefore comes under the category of the symbol.

Symbols

In symbolism, animals' appearance in literature is laden with imposed meaning. In such contexts, Alan Liu remarks, 'the living animal ... becomes insignificant compared to what we can make it stand for' (Liu in Baker, 2000, 30). Indeed, the nature of the living animal is often reduced or distorted in order to make it signify human ideas, until a species may have commonly understood connotations in human thought. Simons suggests that 'The symbol is, perhaps, the most common form of representation and depends on a common language of interpretation if it is to operate effectively as a bearer of meaning' (115). Here, the category of the symbol is broken down further into metaphoric and 'real' appearances of animals, because I find this to be a significant distinction in terms of the degree of animal exploitation.

Metaphor: two-dimensional illustration

When the non-victim protagonists of the novels feel guilt over the re-victimisation of others, this concerns other human characters; animals appear in this only figuratively. The fact that such metaphors also constitute the instrumental use of animals as literary devices is never addressed. However, this is another significant form of re-victimisation, performed by the protagonists in their capacity as narrators, and performed by Atwood as the author. A common role for animals in literature is in the use of animal idiom. Adams observes, 'When we talk about the victimization of humans we use animal metaphors derived from animal sacrifice and animal experimentation: someone is a scapegoat or a guinea pig' (1990, 64-65). Indeed, Atwood demonstrates awareness of the nature of idiom, in that her narrators occasionally reflect on the images involved. In *Surfacing*, as Robert McKay also notes (217), the protagonist does not think metaphorically about animals. She is disturbed by an expression involving skinning cats, used by her father when she was a child. '...it bothered me, I didn't see why they would want to skin a cat even one way' (86). In the present, she is upset by David's reference to split beavers (as female genitalia). '"Why should it be split?" I said. It was like skinning the cat, I didn't get it' (113). This kind of reaction demonstrates an awareness of animal victimhood which the protagonist clearly experienced in childhood and which is now resurfacing. In *The Blind Assassin*, Iris uses animal idiom herself, but she does occasionally reflect upon this. Describing her seasickness on her honeymoon voyage, she writes: 'The sea wasn't rough for that time of year, but nevertheless I was sick as a dog' (297). Then she wonders, in parentheses, 'Why dogs, in this respect? Because they look as if they can't help it. Neither could I' (297). However, even when an author or narrator uses such a device without self-conscious consideration, idiom is not a new use of animals, it is simply a perpetuation of old uses; a cliché does not *further* stereotypes, it recycles pre-existing ideas.

In extended metaphors or motifs, the use of nonhumans is arguably more exploitative. Adams complains, 'We ... distance ourselves from animals through the use of metaphors or similes that distort the reality of other animals' lives. Our representations of animals make them refer to human beings rather than to themselves' (1990, 64). In such cases, animals appear as literary representatives for human concepts. These may also be innovative and therefore striking to the reader, and this means that new stereotypes of animals may develop. At least in the context of a single novel, an extended and repeated metaphor of a particular species (innovative or otherwise) comes to be comprehensible to the reader in those terms, rather than in terms of the animals themselves. For instance, canine metaphor in *The Blind Assassin* is far removed from

that other stereotype of the faithful pet dog. Wolf metaphor is so thoroughly and so pejoratively defined by Alex's rant, which I mentioned in chapter two, that it takes on a specific meaning; this is the 'big bad wolf' of oppression. Once this meaning is applied to a species, like the wolf, or the lizard, that species is readily applied to specific characters, like Richard and Winifred. The reader is likely henceforth to read wolves and reptiles in *The Blind Assassin* as evidence of cruel predation, as I have indeed read and discussed them in chapter two. This means that as a way of conveying meaning, such metaphors are very effective; however, it must be conceded that this use of animals does the species in question very few favours; real wolves and reptiles are tainted by the association with unforgivable human characters.

This is perhaps obvious, given the merciless nature of Iris's depiction of Richard and Winifred. However, even when Atwood's protagonists identify with other animals, the portrayal of these victimised species is not necessarily more favourable. In *The Edible Woman*, when Marian hears about Peter's rabbit prey she flees from him and hides from him rather helplessly. She does not say, overtly, that she is trying to behave like a rabbit, but, as suggested in chapter two, the rabbit story that triggers Marian's flight and especially her 'burrowing,' as she calls it, do suggest this. In this interpretation, Atwood's focus on flight makes the rabbit seem defenseless; this is indeed a rabbit's first reaction to danger, but flight acts as a warning system too, and rabbits are also capable of putting up a fight. More obviously, the sheep that is prey to wolves, in Iris's metaphor of herself against the odds, is described as 'dumb' and inclined to put itself at risk (297). When the predator and prey roles are reversed, later, Winifred is described as a cow (534-35). While this choice of species is not overtly pejorative (Iris uses a domesticated species to show that Winifred is safe from her, the wolf), the connotations of the cow (as dull and complacent) and of calling a woman a cow (objectionable) are probably not lost on the reader and are also appropriate to Iris's feelings towards Winifred. Therefore, victim animals, although the protagonists empathise with them, are not necessarily helpful in terms of human understanding of the reality of the species in question. Thus, even when they are used sympathetically, both predator and prey metaphors are still serving to illustrate human power relations in Atwood's novels, through a deliberate extension animal stereotypes which seems to foreground them without questioning them.

'Real' animals: three-dimensional or two?

The use of 'real' animals in the narrative of a novel is arguably less exploitative than the use of metaphor. No matter what stereotypes we may have received regarding a certain species, the

chances are that these might still be challenged when faced with a living member of that species, either because stereotypes are ill-founded or because of differences between members of a species. In other words, there is more chance of taking a real live animal on its own terms. To some extent, the same is true of 'real' animals in literature; and especially if animals are considered by the characters of a novel as seriously as they are by *Surfacing*'s protagonist, then they come far closer to appearing on their own terms than is possible in metaphor. As Simons notes, although 'the non-human experience cannot be reproduced ... [w]e can, however, imagine non-human experience and sympathetically engage with it by comparing it with our own. This gives us the ability to represent it' (86). Atwood certainly makes this comparison; what she seems to be attempting, however, is a comparison with other animals that illuminates human rather than nonhuman experience.

As well as attempting to become other-than-human, *Surfacing*'s protagonist interacts with real animals on multiple occasions and is increasingly conscious of the nature of this interaction, which in turn highlights it for the reader to the point that it becomes a central concern of the novel. Having been so long in the city, she tries to re-access a childhood familiarity with other species. The first instance of this is when she is woken by birdsong on the island, and struggles to recognise the different species as she used to. 'Birdsong wakes me ... I used to know the species; I listen, my ears are rusty, there's nothing but a jumble of sound' (35). She remembers how to fish, and kills worms and frogs as bait in the process, and she is upset at the death of the heron, and later refuses to kill other animals as her affinity with them increases. The narrator also makes many references to remembered animals, which she came across on the island as a child (73, 120), which she freed or didn't free from her brother's laboratory and that she encountered in school laboratories. She frequently reflects on the nature of human-animal relations, and, as McKay puts it, searches for 'an ethical relationship with animals' (213).

In *The Edible Woman*, by contrast, Marian does not encounter living animals, only meat. She reacts to it as *Surfacing*'s protagonist might, with the difference that she does so compulsively. For no apparent reason, she leafs 'idly' through cook books reading about how turtles are killed and exploring planned diagrams of different cuts of meat. A large number of her food-life associations are arrived as by such visual means. The diagrams in her book show not just the cuts of meat but also the heads and faces of the animals. 'The cow in the book, she recalled, was drawn with eyes and horns and an udder. It stood there quite naturally, not at all perturbed by the peculiar markings painted on its hide' (151). Carrots resemble her own fingers, and rice pudding starts to look like some kind of larvae. The significance of the visual in terms

of Marian's reaction to food is that it emphasises that her aversion to it is *not* the result of deliberate reflection, as it is in the case of *Surfacing*. Of course, the relevance of all kinds of food also diminishes the importance given to animals; it paints vegetarianism as being as irrational and unsustainable as non-eating. However, the novel still raises a certain animal consciousness. Thus, the animals in *Surfacing* are taken very seriously *as animals*, and to some extent in *The Edible Woman* too. The self-conscious relation to animals goes a long way towards negating their exploitation within the novels.

On the other hand, Baker notes the current acknowledgement 'of the extent to which human understanding of animals is shaped by representations rather than by direct experience of them' (2005, n.pag.). Animals in literature appear only through the mediation of the page and the author's construction, and the author usually has reasons, beyond the desire to depict animals on their own terms, for incorporating an animal into a text. Certainly, this is true of Atwood. In *Survival*, she begins her speculation on Canadian victimhood on the premise that 'animals in literature are always symbols' (1972, 75). She writes that when choosing a pet, 'Very rarely is an animal liked or disliked for itself alone; it is chosen for its symbolic anthropomorphic values' (1927, 79), and she believes that the same is true when animals are used in literature, arguing that animals in Canadian literature are chosen for their symbolic victimhood. She comments:

> This could – mistakenly I think – be seen as national guilt: Canada after all was founded on the fur trade, and an animal cannot painlessly be separated from its skin... From the animal point of view Canadians are as bad as the slave trade or the Inquisition; which casts a new light on those beavers on the nickels and caribou on the quarters. But it is much more likely that Canadians themselves feel threatened and nearly extinct as a nation, and suffer also from life-denying experience as individuals – the culture threatens the 'animal' within them – and that their identification with animals is the expression of a deep-seated cultural fear (1972, 79).

Thus, Atwood actually suggests that Canadians might identify with animals directly (in the way that *Surfacing*'s narrator does), but then dismisses that idea in favour of an (anthropocentic) cultural interpretation that *displaces genuine empathy*. Because she limits the role of animals in Canada to symbolic victimhood, Atwood therefore uses animals in the way that Marian Scholtmeijer describes:

> ...animals serve to illuminate and intensify thematic concerns. It is precisely that aspect of the use of animals in stories discussed to this point that might well arouse the argument that none of these animals are animals in fact but only cultural images manufactured to fit into various human problems. Animals are present in all works of fiction, it could be argued, primarily to illuminate the human condition, and they are twisted out of their natural state accordingly (1993, 258).

It is in this way that, within the context of Atwood's novels and the Victim Positions, animals can already be seen to be exploited, especially since Atwood discounts the role of guilt towards animals in Canadian literature. It is chiefly in their capacity as marginalised victims that animals make their appearance in *The Edible Woman, Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin.* In each novel, animals physically enter into the human world only in the capacity of prey, meat or fur; only in *Surfacing* do humans physically enter the nonhuman world. Even these 'real' victimised animals are metaphors too, to illuminate victimhood in the human (Canadian and female) condition, and in the case of *The Edible Woman*, Marian's relationship with meat is simply the 'literalisation' of metaphors of gendered consumption. As Scholtmeijer puts it, 'Parts of the animal ... are co-opted: the animal innocence, vitality, suffering, and most often and paradoxically, the selfsame indifference to culture that makes them meaningful to a modern writer in the first place' (1993, 259). Indeed, in Atwood's novels, animals' very distance from the human is what serves the protagonists' and Atwood's purposes. Simons observes that 'although the symbolic presence of animals in the aesthetic texts may be varied, the significance of this presence is both explained and limited by a language predicated on the binary opposition of the terms human and non-human' (115). As I described in chapters two and three, identification with the margins contributes to the recognition and definition of the protagonists' situation, and therefore to the de-victimisation process, *because of its Otherness*, and regardless of how animals are used, they remain the most Other of the three margins addressed here. Despite the parallels that may be seen with women and Canada, animality is the aspect of the triangle that occupies the furthest position from Atwood's protagonists, not because the protagonists are human, since humans are animals, but because they are *not nonhuman.* This distinction becomes clear in Erica Fudge's discussion of the term 'animal.' She refers to Jacques Derrida's comments on its implications. He writes: 'Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ... are *all the living things* that man does not recognise as his fellows' despite differences between one species and another

(Derrida in Fudge, 162). Derrida's point as it applies to animals is difficult to argue with.[1] Fudge remarks:

> It is hard to deny that 'the animal', the general singular with its definite article, wipes out all difference apart from the difference of the named from the namers. 'The animal' becomes, I think, a ghostly presence, a phantom, not a real animal at all; in fact, animals as such might disappear beyond this smoke screen (162).

Indeed, in Atwood's novels, all of the animals that appear in the narratives, metaphorical or otherwise, merge together to signify simply the absence of humanity. It does not much matter, for the purposes of metaphor, exactly what species is used; Alex's wolves could readily be replaced with lions with little or no change in meaning. The same is often true of the diegetic animals, as Atwood uses them; when Iris visits the British Museum of natural history in *The Blind Assassin*, she does not even specify what kinds of animals she sees; it is enough that they are nonhuman trophies (368). This habit of thought marginalises animals as much as any other; they carry meaning, for humans, chiefly in that they are not human themselves. Especially if Atwood and her protagonists are *only* making use of animals as Others, rather than being genuinely interested in them, then this has a great impact upon the nature of animal meanings in these three novels. As I argued in the previous chapter, if the victim can or must come to exploit the margin as a means of de-victimisation, then this constitutes the return of the centre.

Simons suggests of his own literary analyses that 'all the examples of the use of non-humans in literary texts are acts not of reproduction but of representation' (87). This leads him to the following conclusion:

> Every time we represent an animal we are, however hard we try and however much we wish it was different, engaging in an act which, to a greater or less degree, appropriates the non-human experience as an index of humanness. All representations of animals are, therefore, a facet of the speciesism which bedevils the human relationship with the non-human and undermines our ability to live in the environment which has been created for us. Obviously to write about a fox is a very different act from hunting one to death with

[1] Though it is surely no less problematic to refer to all human beings as the general singular 'Man,' as Derrida does here. Although French is a more gendered language, this is unlikely to be the fault of translation: he could say *les humains* instead of *l'homme*.

> hounds, but it is, none the less, a use of the animal for a means designed to further the aims of the human even where the intention is to alleviate the suffering of foxes (87).

Even *Surfacing*'s overt resistance to anthropocentrism is thus undermined by literary instrumentalism; ironically, if the protagonist were not trying to resist anthropocentrism, animals would be less instrumental to her goals. While re-victimisation is something which the protagonists occasionally acknowledge, they seldom extend this to animals. This is because Atwood's treatment of animals is not self-critical; she does not *question* her use of animals. Beyond the symbolic role that animals can have, there are many other implications of animal use which either escape her, or with which she does not concern herself.

A necessary sacrifice?

It may be, however, that compromise with regard to animals is necessary, both to the attainment or maintenance of non-victimhood and to the possibility of animal representation in literature. In terms of de-victimisation, Atwood warns,

> There comes a point at which seeing yourself as a victimised animal – naming your condition, as the crucial step from the ignorance of Position One through the knowledge of Position Two to the self-respect of Position Three – can become the *need* to see yourself as a victimised animal, and at that point you will be locked into Position Two, unable to go any further (1972, 81).

What this implies is that seeing oneself as animal is a recognition of victimhood, but needing to entails a lack of self-respect, which is necessary to escape victimhood. This is one possible explanation for the move away from animal identification. McKay's reaction to this is that for Atwood, seeing oneself as an animal

> ...is a cultural weakness or pathology that should be transcended because it short-circuits [Canada's de-victimisation process] from identifying with the victimized animal ... through self-knowledge and self-definition ... to healthy self-respect. The problem with Atwood's otherwise valuable description of the progression from colonial to postcolonial consciousness ... is that such progression occurs in direct proportion to a concomitant disavowal of the animal's right to be an object of cultural concern ... She makes it

> *logically impossible* to render the victimization of animals in literature. In doing so, she herself replicates the speciesist sacrificial logic that is in fact tested within [*Surfacing*] (219).

When *Surfacing*'s protagonist questions this logic, what she finds is that empathy with animals is not enough. 'I regret them; but they give only one kind of truth' (184). She cannot maintain her animality, or her becoming, and survive. Brian Massumi explains that becoming must be in perpetual motion in order to continue, because structures function by categorising whatever they encounter.

> If the bodies that come to inhabit the newly recognized (remolarized) space of affect simply move in without reproblematizing it, they are merely finding new accommodations for their own curtailment: adopt-a-sameness. For the becoming-other to continue, the bodies-come-lately must submit the new invention to the same treatment... Becoming must keep on becoming, an indefinite movement of invention opening wider and wider zones of autonomy... (101-02).

This means that becoming is very difficult to maintain. According to Massumi, 'It is probable, but not a foregone conclusion, that the body-in-becoming and its cohort will be reduced to the confines of a category – the world may just have to expand to fit them'(102). The fears of *Surfacing*'s narrator that she will simply be considered deranged and placed in an institution reflect this categorising tendency on the part of social structures. Massumi writes:

> Faced with such a compelling adversary, it is not surprising that most becomings-other fall short. A body may cross the threshold of molar individuality with relative ease. But few are they who find their collectivity. The hyperdifferentiated futures a body-in-becoming holds in virtuality rarely come to pass (140).

Although she is not thinking about becoming *per se*, Atwood also explains how difficult it can be for an individual to maintain alternative subjectivity within social constraints. She implies that an individual who has reached Position Three in a society which is still in Position One or Two is liable to suffer persecution (1972, 39). For Atwood's protagonists, then, reconciliation of their complex identification with the margins is therefore necessary to escaping this suffering. Despite

his earlier condemnation of Atwood's speciesism, McKay seems prepared to accept this interpretation of the outcome of *Surfacing*. He writes:

> Clearly, there is recognition that humanity cannot identify with the animals... Our construction in language *requires* the sacrificial substitution of ... the animal... Yet, as both Atwood and [Judith] Butler show, a simple renunciation of this construction ... is clearly impossible (224).

McKay suggests that 'in order to function in human society' *Surfacing*'s protagonist must renounce her connection with animals (224). 'To put it succinctly, *Surfacing* suggests that pro-animal politics is "humanly" impossible' (224). Following Judith Butler, who asserts 'the constitutive nature of exclusion in any social field' (McKay, 225), McKay concludes that the Othering of animals is inevitable in human society (225).

My reading of Atwood's animals, both in her own terms and in terms of theories of subjectivity and representation, results in two possible interpretations. On the one hand, animals inevitably appear in Atwood's novels in relation to the purposes they serve in the human world, as the Other against which the human is defined. Therefore, for both the reader and the protagonists themselves, nonhumans emphasise marginalisation of the novels' protagonists, and this contributes to their motivation to move toward non-victimhood. This has serious implications, however, for the success of the Victim Positions laid out in *Survival*. If the de-victimisation process inevitably results in the exploitation and victimisation of others, then this surely undermines the aims of the positions: what looks like a progression turns out to be a vicious cycle instead. Thus, the very use other animals as representatives of Otherness and victimisation, which serves as such an effective tool for Atwood and her protagonists, paradoxically constitutes the greatest challenge to the success and the integrity, of the Victim Positions, as they highlight the potential for the concept's failure through the perpetuation of self-centred oppression.

On the other hand, however, it is also reasonable to follow Fudge and Simons, who both conclude that attempted representation and especially sympathetic representation is, however artificial, better than no representation at all. Simons 'sees literary representation as a vital and genuinely creative means of gaining imaginative access to "non-human experience"' (Baker, 2005, n.pag.). Fudge writes that in light of the limitations of the human perspective on animals, there are two possible approaches. Either

> ... we acknowledge the limitations ... but simultaneously accept that what we can achieve with those limitations is important and worthwhile... Or we acknowledge the limitations and from that perspective give up the attempt to discuss animals... My decision has been to go for the former option (159).

Both of these conclusions suggest that some separation between humans and other animals is inevitable.

However, Atwood seems to raise a third possibility, even if it does not endure in these novels. In *Surfacing*, *The Edible Woman* and *The Blind Assassin*, animals do, on occasion, propose a more radical line of flight; they suggest an alternative path beyond the centre-margin structures, or even beyond the victim positions, to a state of human-animal equality. Atwood pursues this alternative in her most recent novel, *Oryx and Crake*. This novel's genre and setting, its male perspective and the very particular nature of the animals involved all set it apart from *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing* and *The Blind Assassin*, to the extent that it cannot be adequately addressed here; it requires a very different approach from the one that I have taken. However, in some respects it takes up where the earlier novels leave off. Adopting a style resembling science-fiction, which she calls 'speculative fiction' (Prior, 14), Atwood creates a futuristic world in which genetic engineering has become the norm and hybrid species proliferate. An engineered virus has drastically changed the power relations between species, leaving humanity endangered, on an equal footing with or even at the mercy of other animals and struggling to survive. The protagonist, Snowman, is one of the last humans left, vulnerable to the hostile environment, afraid to approach other survivors and wondering, 'Can a single ant be said to be alive, in any meaningful sense of the word, or does it only have relevance in terms of its anthill?' (371). By shifting her setting thus to explore the future of existence, Atwood gives herself sufficient scope and license to question the role of humans as a species.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.

Adams, Carol J. and Donovan, Josephine. *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, 1995.

Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 1990.

Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003.

Atwood, Margaret. "If You Can't Say Something Nice, Don't Say Anything at All." In *Language in Her Eye: Writing and Gender: View by Canadian Women Writing in English*, edited by Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard and Eleanor Wachtel. 1990.

Atwood, Margaret. *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Atwood, Margaret. *Surfacing*. London: Virago Press, 1979.

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd, 1972.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Blind Assassin*. London: Virago Press, 2001.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Edible Woman*. London: Virago Press, 1980.

Baker, Steve. "Introduction." *Society and Animals*, special issue: The Representation of Animals (2005), Online Available: http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa9.3/baker.shtml.

Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*: Reaktion, 2000.

Birke, Lynda. *Feminism, Animals and Science: The Naming of the Shrew*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1994.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Metamorphosis and Identity*. New York: Zone Books, 2001.

Cartmill, Matt. *A View to Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*. Massachusetts and London: Havard University Press, 1993.

Connor, Steven, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Derrida, Jacques. ""Eating Well," or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques

Derrida." In *Who Comes after the Subject?*, edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

Dunayer, Joan. "Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots." In *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, edited by Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Emberley, Julia. *The Cultural Politics of Fur*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Fudge, Erica. *Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2002.

Hobgood, Jennifer. "Anti-Edibles: Capitalism and Schizophrenia in Margaret Atwood's the Edible Woman." *Style* 36, no. 1 (2002). Online Available: http://www.il.proquest.com/

Hutcheon, Linda. "The Particular Meets the Universal." In *Language in Her Eye: Writing and Gender: Views by Canadian Women Writing in English*, edited by Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard and Eleanor Wachtel. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1990.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies*. Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Irvine, Lorna. *Sub/Version: Canadian Fictions by Women*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1986.

Kheel, Marti. "License to Kill: An Ecofeminist Critique of Hunters' Discourse." In *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, edited by Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Kilgour, Maggie. *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Lippit, Akira Mizuta. *Electric Animal: Towards a Rhetoric of Wildlife*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Lury, Celia. *Identity and Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Massumi, Brian. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992.

McKay, Robert. ""Identifying with the Animals": Language, Subjectivity, and the Animal Politics of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*." In *Figuring Animals*, edited by Mary Sanders Pollock and Catherine Rainwater. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985.

Mullan, Bob and Garry Marvin. *Zoo Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Nadeau, Chantal. *Fur Nation: From the Beaver to Brigitte Bardot.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Plumwood, Val. "Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, edited by Karen J. Warren. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Prior, Sian. "Atwood's Apocalypse." *Habitat Australia* 32, no. 1 (2004). Online Available: http://infotrac.galegroup.com

Polk, James. "Lives of the Hunted." *Canadian Literature* summer, no. 53 (1972).

Ryan, James R. "Hunting with the Camera." In *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, edited by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Sarap, Madan. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism.* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988.

Scholtmeijer, Marian. "The Power of Otherness: Animals in Women's Fictions." In *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, edited by Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Scholtmeijer, Marian. *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice.* Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Sheehan, Paul. "Postmodernism and Philosophy." In *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Steven Connor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Simons, John. *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation.* Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography.* London: Penguin Books, 1997.

Sztompka, Piotr. "Evolving Focus on Human Agency in Contemporary Social Theory." In *Agency and Structure, Reorienting Social Theory*, edited by Piotr Sztompka. Yverdon and Langhorne: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1994.

Sztompka, Piotr. "Society as Social Becoming: Beyond Individualism and Collectivism." In *Agency and Structure: Reorienting Social Theory*, edited by Piotr Sztompka. Yverdon and Langhorne: Gordon and Break Science Publishers, 1994.

Thomas, Keith. *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.

Warner, Marina. "Stolen Shadows, Lost Souls: Body and Soul in Photography." *Raritan* 15, no. 2 (1995). Online Available: ejournals.ebsco.com

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank Philip Armstrong, who first introduced me to this area, was a dedicated supervisor, and continues to go beyond the call of duty in his support of my work. Special thanks also go to Anna Smith for her help and expertise during the first stage of my research, and to Maureen Montgomery for her sound advice on later drafts. I would also like to thank the staff of the English Programme at the University of Canterbury, especially Jennifer Middendorf, and my fellow thesis writers Tanja Schwalm and Carla Molloy. Thanks also to those of my friends and family who bore with me during this project, particularly John and Marion Borrell, Doris Low, Rebecca Cox (who said, "you have to do this"), Brynmor Thomas, Julian Novitz, Nicki Reed, James Cleland, Sarah Newman, Andrew Shamy, and of course, the all-enduring Mark.